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THE BREATH OF SCANDAL

EDWIN BALMER

GIFT OF
M. G. Luck



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THE BREATH OF SCANDAL

By Edwin Balmer

Resurrection Rock
The Breath of Scandal

In collaboration with
William MacHarg

The Blind Man's Eyes
The Indian Drum

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She snatched up a letter; held it. *Frontispiece.*
See page 71.

THE BREATH OF SCANDAL

BY

EDWIN BALMER

WITH FRONTISPIECE BY
RALPH P. COLEMAN

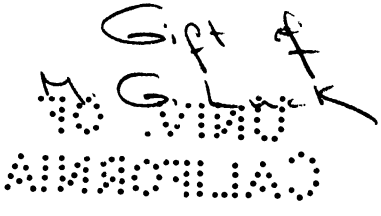


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THE BREATH OF SCANDAL

THE BREATH OF SCANDAL

CHAPTER I

GREGG MOWBRY, who had come home with nothing unusual on his mind, flung his new brown overcoat on a hook in the hall closet, tossed his hat after it, and was cheerfully whistling on his way to his room when the maid appeared from the rear hall and spoke to him shyly.

"Why, good evening," he replied in his pleasant way, halting. "Mr. Whittaker home yet?"

"No, sir; but he should be soon. He wanted early dinner to-night."

"Mail or telephone to-day, Dora?"

"I put two letters on your dresser. Mr. Hartford called; and Miss Hale telephoned for you from Evanston about five o'clock; she left her name and said to tell you. A young lady — I think Miss Hale again, Mr. Mowbry — called about ten minutes ago. She didn't say her name that time," the girl added.

"Thanks," Gregg said. "No message then?"

"Oh, yes, sir, a particular one. The first time she called, she said would you please be sure to telephone her when you came in."

"Thanks," he said, and half turned for her to pass him in the narrow hallway of the apartment; and she went forward to bestow the inconspicuous attentions

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which everywhere made life smooth for Gregg Mowbry; she opened the coat closet and carefully arranged his overcoat upon a hanger and took out the evening newspaper he had thrust into the pocket.

Gregg went on to his room which was the first of three large bedchambers described, in the agent's embossed booklet of Number — East Pearson Street, as "Master's Rooms." These were on the east, facing lakeward over a vacant, flat stretch of that newly made promontory just north of the Chicago River and east of the original shore of the lake. A few years ago, indeed, there was only a sandbar upon which that picturesque lake mariner, "Cap" Streeter, grounded his schooner; there he squatted upon the emerging sands and, with an eye to the exceptional advantages of real estate in such a situation, he asserted title to the strip by right of discovery and defended himself with his rifle from behind his driftwood barricades. The old skipper long ago was run out, of course, and, in the manner of extending Chicago lakeward, many thousands of cubic yards of refuse, tin cans, cinders, stone and sand were carted in; upon these was spread loam from the prairie; tall, well-designed, luxurious apartment buildings rose on that land, so that now the captain's "Deestrict of Lake Michigan" has become the newest and most preferred part of the new, ever-spreading city.

No place is more popular with young Chicago couples possessing money and social opportunities; consequently no place is more desirable in the eyes of those people eager to appear to possess both. But besides being fashionable, it is convenient and pleasant, so it is chosen by many without ulterior purposes. Of these was Gregg Mowbry, who was there, as he cheerfully would have been almost anywhere else, because Bill

Whittaker liked "the place"— this being, specifically, the east apartment on the third floor of an expensive building which otherwise was let to some of those young married people, whose parents were helping them pay the rent, or else to middle-aged, established men with families, each of whom could afford four or five thousand a year for a few rooms.

William Whittaker liked the place, not solely for its unquestionable value in the minds of persons you met socially but even more because to live here evidently was an advantage in his business; for Bill was a lawyer and, though only twenty-eight, Whittaker undoubtedly would be the next name to be lettered on the many doors of Kemphill, James, Jones and Stern in the First National Bank Building. Their clients were such obviously successful people as lived within the new loop of the Lake Shore Drive about "Streeterville"; and Billy's father (who was a banker in Bay City, Michigan), recognizing that it was an asset to a young lawyer in Chicago to live in evident prosperity, sent regularly the difference between what Bill earned and what he necessarily spent. Gregg had no help from home; and his salary and commissions seldom equalled Bill's earnings; so Gregg had no business to spend so much on living; but, persistently, it was Gregg who in the council of two downright opposed the taking of a third partner. He put it on the ground that they ought to keep a guest room.

"You can't call a place a home where you can't put up a man overnight," he argued; but his real reason was not to have others in but to keep another out. Gregg and Bill had been together since they were freshmen at the University of Michigan. That was for eleven years, now; and whatever their association meant

to Bill, it meant far more to Gregg; for Bill had always had brothers of his own in Bay City, but Gregg was one of those only children who ought to have been born in a large family. To come back to his own possessions meant, to Gregg, to return to things shared by Bill; he could never enter his door without at once thinking of Bill; and to-night this was with special keenness when he went to his room and picked up the letters from his dresser.

The one which Dora had left on top was from his father in Muskegon; and the sight of the familiar blue paper and the firm, friendly handwriting gave Gregg an image of the doctor, sitting at his old desk in the office overlooking the lake, away up there on the Michigan shore, and writing his regular Saturday letter. Gregg opened it and glanced through its three pages to make sure that everything was all right at home; then he ripped the envelope addressed in the impulsive, interesting-looking writing of Marjorie Hale.

His hand suddenly clamped upon the note and he looked down, breathing a little quicker while he listened to a strong, steady step which told him that Whittaker had come home. Billy went on to his own room, so Gregg read:

Dear Mr. Mowbry:

You knew me better than I; for I didn't like "Aphrodite" a bit; but still I'm glad I saw it. And that's not inconsistent.

But the purpose of this epistle is this: mother's having a few people in for dinner before we go over to the Lovells' dance; will you come? Mother or I've telephoned mostly for this spur-of-the-instant gathering; in comparison, this invitation to you is pompous. So just 'phone and come.

Billy Whittaker's hand struck the door of the bathroom between the bedrooms and Gregg thrust Marjorie's note into his pocket.

"Hello, Bill," he hailed casually, as Whittaker stood in the doorway. Communistic use of personal possessions, between these two friends, had been stopped short of apparel by the fact that, though Gregg was tall enough, Billy was a big man. His light, yellow hair, half upright in obstinate, boyish pompadour, whenever not recently brushed down, almost touched the top of the low doorframe; Billy's was a broad, good-natured face, with steady and reliable eyes, hazel in color. Billy usually seemed a little flushed, especially when he was pleased and now he was warmly red in his satisfaction over the note which he held.

"Mrs. Hale's giving a dinner to-night before the Lovells' dance, Gregg," he announced. "I told Marjorie we were both going there; so she's asked me to dinner and told me to bring you along. You'll come, of course."

"Why, I don't know, Bill," Gregg said, temporizing.

"Why not?"

"Hartford"; Gregg recollected an excuse. "I ought to see him to-night. If I'm going up to that dance later, I'll have to get about to Hartford's place for dinner."

"What have you up with that fellow now?" Billy demanded, entering the room; and Gregg knew that, temporarily at least, he had diverted Bill by a challenge to his dearest ideals of man's work and life. "You're not thinking of changing into another line of business again to go with Hartford?"

"Why not?" Gregg this time inquired.

"You know the reasons; the question is, why should you?"

"A couple of thousand more a year, Bill."

"To do what?"

"Market that new carburetor of his."

"Do you want to market carburetors the rest of your life?"

Gregg laughed disarmingly; it was always impossible for Billy to get wholly angry with him, much as the serious and conscientious Whittaker would have liked to punch Gregg's careless, handsome head, if that would put some sense of self-accountability into it.

"Look here, Bill; I don't really get any deep experience out of selling refrigerating machines; but I do it — for seven thousand a year. Honestly, I don't see any spiritual or moral difference, except for the possible effect of shock on my creditors, if I'm able to pay 'em by taking nine thousand from Hartford for boosting a kerosene carburetor for Fords."

"Damn!" said Whittaker, who seldom swore. "No one's comparing the moralities of refrigeration and carburetors. We're talking about what you're doing to your life in shifting about whenever you get a good offer. If selling kerosene carburetors is what you want to do to develop yourself, you know I say, 'Go to it.' No matter what you want to do, find the thing that is and stick to it. To do something else only for the sake of taking in more money now is ——" he halted in the earnestness of his exasperation.

"Say it, Bill."

"Selling yourself, Gregg; and you've no end of offers for yourself. That's your trouble. Everybody likes you, whether you care to have 'em or not. Everybody wants to please you; everybody that's got something to

sell wants you to go with him; and a man who's buying your line likes to wait to see you. There's no development in that for you; just a little more money without any more effort. Oh, you don't even know what I'm talking about."

"Of course I do, Bill. You want me to be making effort, for effort's sake, even when it's not necessary; you want ——"

But Bill had turned in his hopelessness and gone back through the bathroom into his own room, pulling the door firmly shut behind him. Gregg, left alone, put his hand in his pocket over the note from Marjorie Hale, and he was standing at his window looking out at the lights by the breakwater and whistling quietly when somebody tapped cautiously on his door to the hall, opened it and looked in.

He was a compact, alert-looking young man, a few years older than Gregg and Billy; Cuncliffe by name, and the Chicago agent for an Akron tire company. He was wearing a silk hat and had on a dark overcoat above evening clothes, evidently.

"Come in, Jim!" Gregg welcomed him. "When did you drop up? I didn't hear you."

"Um!" Cluncliffe warned, shaking his head and raising his hand toward Whittaker's room as he came in. "I came up during the discussion. What was that Bill's all worked up about anyway, Gregg?"

"Oh," said Gregg. "Just me; another round of the ordinary riot we stage whenever we're bored. Hartford — you know him — made a proposition to me; I mentioned it to Bill and, of course, he thinks I shouldn't go to selling carburetors unless I can feel sort of religious about them; so I could go into a Billy Sunday frenzy for kerosene combustion."

"I know his line of thought; so that's all?" said Cuncliffe, relieved. "From the sounds that drifted into the hall, I thought possibly he'd heard of the hell to pay at the Hales'."

"What hell to pay?" Gregg said quickly, his voice now even more careful than his visitor's.

Cuncliffe lit a cigarette and tossed the box to Gregg, who seated himself on the bed. "With Mr. Hale. Don't you know anything about it?"

"What?" said Gregg cautiously.

"Sybil Russell," Cuncliffe replied, and turned toward Gregg's glass; he took off his hat and laid it down and, picking up Gregg's brushes, he busied himself smoothing his hair.

Gregg said nothing for several moments; then he went into the bathroom and made sure that Whittaker's door was firmly shut; he returned and closed his own door.

"Yes; I heard Mr. Hale knows a girl named Russell," he admitted at last. "She'd married a man named Russell during the war. He came from Rockford, and was in the army, wasn't he?"

"That's the one."

"She busted up with him even before his division sailed, I understand."

"Yes; she'd been out at Rockford with him, but she came to Chicago and took a flat up north near Wilson Avenue," Cuncliffe informed, putting down the brushes and turning around.

Gregg refrained from further comment; he merely waited, holding an unlit cigarette in one hand, the other in his side pocket clasped, unconsciously, over Marjorie Hale's note to him. He felt queerly unsteady

as he thought of Marjorie, and then he tried not to think of her.

"A salesman of mine, Nyman, lives up that way; in the next building, in fact," Cuncliffe continued. "Nyman's married; has a baby; a darned decent fellow. He says his wife made friends with Mrs. Russell at the markets up there; she liked her. Mrs. Russell came to Nyman's flat a couple of times and listened for the baby while Nyman took his wife to picture shows. Then they found out about her; he mentioned it to me one day when he happened to recognize Mr. Hale in our shop. Remember you told him I'd give him wholesale prices on tires? He came down with his driver to arrange about it, and Nyman told me he was the man who goes to that flat."

Cuncliffe hesitated and Gregg waited, silent.

"Of course, I told Nyman to keep his mouth shut and be careful," Cuncliffe continued. "But he talked to me about it again to-day. It seems that Russell's hanging around home."

Gregg jerked and looked over at Jim. "Home?" he repeated, quickly. "That's Russell's home?"

"Didn't mean that. She got a divorce from Russell a couple of years ago, I understand. Nyman says he's no real claim on her; but he's down and out and also wise to the situation with her; he's found out who Hale is and he means to make something out of it. Now you know Mr. Hale better than I do; is he the kind to stand for a hold-up?"

Gregg stared at Jim and, almost absent-mindedly, shook his head.

"Then Russell is all set to start something. He has an army pistol and he's in steady connection with some one's private still. Nyman says the next time

Hale leaves his home to go 'out of town,' he's going to get satisfaction or get Hale."

Cuncliffe sat down and leaned over, flecking an imperceptible speck from his dancing shoe; Gregg lit his cigarette, his slender, strong hands quivering in a manner strange to him.

"What are you telling me all this for, Jim?" he demanded directly at last.

"Nyman passed it to me, because I knew Hale and the family."

"So you're passing it on to me."

"I hardly know them at all; you're a friend of theirs and didn't you say something about going to a dance up in Evanston to-night?"

"I'm going with Bill," Gregg said. "He's the friend there. I should think Bill would be the one to ——" but he stopped, ashamed of himself.

"Bill take care of this?" Jim said, smiling grimly as he glanced toward the door which Gregg himself had so carefully closed. "You don't want Bill even to know about it, do you? You bet not; you know Bill, Gregg. Can you just imagine him trying to tackle this? First he'd be knocked absolutely flat; he'd take the count; and when he came to, he'd have to start reforming everybody concerned and work up a strong penitential sentiment. Good old Bill; he thinks the world can run on ten commandments and fourteen points; nothing but open alliances, openly arrived at. It's not only impossible for Bill but figure where it would land him to cut into that mix-up; he'd lose his Marjorie sure."

"His Marjorie?"

"Where've you been recently? You never heard of Bill looking twice at a girl before; but he's her

picture next to his mother's on the dresser in there, hasn't he? He's up in Evanston every time I hear of him out anywhere; looks to me he has to have that girl, Gregg, or he'll never have any one. If there ever was a one-woman man, that's Bill. Lucky she seems to like him; of course she ought to, if she knows a good man when she sees one. Now, do you want to slip him the job of mixing into that affair?"

Gregg shook his head, hoping that the cigarette smoke was hiding the redness of his face. "No, Jimmie — but how the devil can I?"

"What've you got to lose?"

"I mean, how can a fellow like me mix into Mr. Hale's personal concerns? Damn it, it's his own life."

"You haven't got to argue it's not; no one's expecting you to start a reform; you simply have to tip him not to give Russell any opportunity for action just now. Why, he'll thank you for it, Gregg. He has his family to protect and his job to look out for, too. He's worked up into a big position; making a lot of money, but he hasn't a stock interest that amounts to anything yet; and a man doesn't advance himself to be general manager of a big company like Tri-Lake Materials without pushing aside a lot of others and making his enemies. Take E. H. Stanway, right there in his company; he figured only a year or so ago there was nothing surer in the world than for him to step into the presidency of a ten-million-dollar corporation when old Dorsett shuffles off or gives up; but here's Charles Hale coming along so fast that, if Stanway is vice-president, he knows that Hale's practically past him. He don't want Dorsett to resign any more, unless he can kill off Hale first. Now suppose Russell takes a shot at Hale near that flat to-night or anything else

happens to bring the police into the case and the newspapers get hold of it, — that wouldn't do a thing to Hale, would it? Stanway would use it so they'd not only knock out all Hale's chances for the big job but — to take no chances at all — Stanway'd see that Tri-Lake kicked Hale out on the street right now; and, after the way that'd be done, who'd pick him up? I'd risk a word for his family's sake, and Bill's, if I was going by his house to-night."

Gregg walked to the window, his head down; and slowly he came back. "Glad you told me," he said at last to Jim. "What direction are you going to-night?"

"South Shore Club."

"I thought it wasn't in the direction of Evanston. Have a good time, Jimmy."

"'Night, Gregg."

Left alone in his room, Gregg stared at the wall. Suppose that this, which threatened, should happen; suppose he stood by and let it, without making a move to save any one. Bill? Gregg jerked, almost with a shudder, as he thought of what that would do to Bill. And what to Marjorie? Something too frightful for Gregg to imagine happening to her. For to her, how wonderful and honorable a man was her father; to her, how wonderful and glorious and clean was life! Gregg knew no one else who felt such faith in goodness of living; to her, to be alive meant to be gay and confident and unafraid. He could not think of her after *that*, if it found her; Majorie in ignominy and shame!

Gregg straightened about, suddenly, as he did when making a decision; he went through the bathroom, and without ceremony, opened Billy Whittaker's door to

find Billy standing before his dresser with his photograph of Marjorie in his hands.

"Oh, Bill," Gregg said carelessly. "Are you calling up the Hales'? Then will you tell Mrs. Hale that I'm coming for dinner with you?"

CHAPTER II

THEY went out together in Gregg's car, which was a new one, not fully paid for, but a good deal better than Billy's. It was a roadster with space for three on the wide seat, and consequently Gregg, while he drove, had plenty of room to sprawl comfortably, especially as Billy, who never let himself be lazy, sat erect on the right. They did not talk much about anything and not at all of Marjorie Hale or of Gregg's offer from Hartford. The March night was clear and mild for Chicago at the end of the winter; a little snow had fallen the day before, and melted that noon, and after sunset had refrozen, forming a film of ice here and there on the roadway.

"You ought to have chains on," Billy advised.

"Oh, I like to slip a little —— How do you care for the pick-up of this engine? Michigan's playing Illinois basketball to-night."

"I saw; at Ann Arbor. How is our five, Gregg?"

Neither thought much about what he was saying; each lit a cigarette and absorbed himself in his own thoughts. As they proceeded from the promontory of the new, "made" land, they turned north beside the lake on the Drive, which follows the line of the shore where the perfectors of Chicago temporarily have remained so indulgent to nature that they have merely buttressed back the washing waters with a low, graceful, concrete escarpment and planted a strip of park between this stern beach and the Drive. Opposite, on

the west side of the Drive and facing the lake, stand a row of stone and brick and terra-cotta mansions, each of obvious expense and, patently, so costly to own and inhabit that this stretch of the Lake Michigan shore is familiarly referred to as "the Gold Coast." These huge and pretentious homes, known by the names of many of the most wealthy and conspicuous families of the city, always represented to Billy Whittaker a certain end of ambition, spurring his determination to work faithfully so that on some day, perhaps fifteen or twenty years ahead, he might be able to purchase one of these houses and move his wife and family to the Drive. For long before he fell in love, Billy formed the habit of thinking of himself with a wife and children, whenever he imagined himself in middle age. Now he thought of bringing Marjorie, and her children and his, to live on this stretch of the lake front.

There was a large and particularly pleasant-looking house a little above the Bordens' (which was one of the few homes which Billy knew even by name) which he hoped would be the one on the market when he should be ready to buy; when he passed it, he dared, for a few bold heart-thumps, to picture himself at the door with Marjorie; then he came down to earth and earnestly devoted himself to his serious preparations to interest Marjorie that evening and to say the right thing to her father, to whom he found it rather difficult to talk. Billy never had any trouble with Mrs. Hale, who had strongly favored him from the first.

In so far as Gregg ever made mental preparations, he took thought for Marjorie's mother; for Mr. Hale and he always got on without effort. To-night, of course, was likely to prove a special case; but Gregg

believed in letting future difficulties look out for themselves.

He observed that the great castle of the Potter Palmer home was still dark and closed; something seemed to be going on at the Reynolds'; and at Victor Lawson's house; and evidently there was a dinner at the Cranes'; probably for those official French people who were in the city, Gregg thought. The possessors of some of the homes on the Drive were more than mere names to him; for he had been a guest at an occasional semi-public entertainment in certain of the mansions he passed. But it never occurred to Gregg to dream of owning one of them; indeed, his hazardings of his future were altogether too vague to picture himself founding a family. Gregg meant to marry, but the thought of a girl never started such institutional ideas in his head as belonged in Billy's.

Gregg expected only that some day he was to discover that he no longer could be satisfied with mere friendship with a certain girl — with bantering, teasing talks, broken by sudden, serious interludes of confidences; no longer content with handclasps at greeting and with the intimate, and yet so meaningless, embrace of a dance; no longer satisfied by an hour of wandering beside the lake on an autumn day or by an evening at her side in a theater. Some day the reluctant, lingering good-by at midnight no longer would be tolerable; and she and he together would agree to explore that mystery of love which neither of them knew.

In these days, when Gregg fancied what sort the girl might be who would stand with him "in the presence of God and this company," to take the queer,

old-fashioned oath of marriage, he imagined himself beside a girl very like Marjorie Hale; indeed, when he thought of her, he wanted her no different from Marjorie; and yet he would not let himself think of marrying Marjorie Hale; for, as Jim Cuncliffe had said, she was Bill's and the only girl whom Billy had ever loved. Gregg had cared about a lot of other girls; and he knew himself well enough to believe he was likely to care for many more.

Yet he had never felt for any girl as he was feeling for Marjorie Hale now; as he drew nearer and nearer to her, he found himself for the first time forgetful, during long stretches of his musings, of the fact that she was Billy's girl; he was thinking of her as the girl whom he must protect from a blighting danger threatening her of which Billy was not even aware.

When, with a start, Gregg came back to consciousness of Bill, it seemed unfair somehow not to let him know; then Gregg glanced at Bill's familiar, clean-cut, obstinate face. Good old Bill! How little he let himself know about the low in life; he simply did not think of the low as existing for him or for his; and now for Gregg to take him into this affair! Cuncliffe was right; Gregg could not hand Bill anything like that.

The car, having passed through Lincoln Park, was rushing on beside miles of apartments, shops and motion-picture theaters and soon approached a gay, brightly lighted district of resplendent, garish buildings where, a few years ago, had stretched the wide lawns and winding roads and patches of bush and "woods" about family homes of which Eugene Field had sung in his poems. Not far away to one side had lived Eugene Field and over there had been the "Waller

Lot," where children had done those redoubtable things told in the ballad which Gregg used to beg to be read to him over and over when he was a little boy. Now in their neighborhood and northward had crowded in an amazing conglomeration of "new people," eager to live in new, compact ways; and thousands of pretentious apartments — three, six or sixty to a building — were sprung up to shelter them; cafeterias and confectioneries to feed them; movies and dance halls and "gardens" to amuse them. Respectable people, most of them, if extremely dressed in the most modern fashion and if, by older standards of the vicinity, overfond of their new, conspicuous surroundings or loud or gauche in manner. For most of these people were on their way up from obscure localities; some from the blistered, grimy tenements of such dreary, west side streets as Elston and Halsted and West Division, where in the Italian or Polish or Scandinavian settlements their immigrant parents had begun to prosper; some from similar sections of Milwaukee or Toledo and such cities; but the most of them were from towns and little cities of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan and Wisconsin.

Billy Whittaker's practical mind largely ignored this neighborhood which held small interest in itself for him, as it represented no strata through which he had to pass, since he had started in Chicago several layers above this. But Gregg failed to think practically of people by strata and it appeared to him that those about here were working out for themselves a new way of ordering their lives. He did not go far enough in his thinking to decide that the attractiveness of such localities as this was what chiefly was draining the towns and the country and so enormously swelling the city and therefore that, of all parts of the city, this

was by far the most significant and portentous. All he thought was that here was a place of new and interesting manners; a lot of men, from everywhere, living alone; a lot of girls, from every place, taking the same elevated trains down-town with the men; working in the same offices; coming back to patronize the same delicatessens, cafeterias and picture shows; some of them continuing absolutely independent; some of them marrying and trying to carry into marriage as much as possible of their independence and going on just about the same as before; some of them attempting a home with children or one child, anyway. To look at them and to hear them talk you would never suspect them of sentimentalities; but they bought a great lot of "Wynken, Blynken and Nod" and of Volland cards and sentimental mottoes.

Gregg's undiscriminating acquaintance included several people about here; and, not far off, now, was the apartment where Cuncliffe's salesman, Nyman, lived with his wife and baby; and, in the flat building next them, lived Mrs. Russell. Other Mrs. Russells inhabited apartments in different sections above here, Gregg knew; he heard about definite ones in half-boastful, half-ashamed stories told him by some of his friends. Gregg had accepted the fact of them as he accepted other obvious occurrences in life, without thinking about them one way or another. Women of that sort did not appeal to him; they did attract a lot of men, some younger than Gregg; some older; some single, some married; some worthless loafers; some hard workers and men of reputation and ability; some were men whom Gregg did not like; but others, who "lived" in the same way, he did like. The affair was confusing and offered all sorts of inconsistencies whenever

you tried to think it out; so Gregg had bothered himself about the subject very little, even when he heard that Mr. Hale was one of those who had his own way of living. Gregg had wished, vaguely, that Marjorie's father were different; at least, Gregg would have preferred to have known nothing about it, but he had not considered it an alarming matter. For a man like Mr. Hale, of course, would be discreet. Yet, sometimes, even such a man lost control of the situation and the explosive outflare of the thing concealed swept a sensation over the country. Gregg bent forward a little, to better view the street he was passing; and suddenly he was sick with the fear which gripped him as he imagined Marjorie's father exposed in a public scandal, for all the world to peer into, and Marjorie learning — learning.

His car sped into a quieter section of homes of men recently successful and, on this north shore of the city, imitating the older dwellings of the Drive; then a few more miles of more modest houses and apartments brought them to the first of the suburban towns, almost as old as Chicago and, in spite of the great inflow of recent arrivals, still recognized as staid, intellectual and idealistic, a small, well-kept city of fine homes and prosperous churches, of schools and a university.

As the car passed large, good-looking houses, far back from the street and each set on a wide lawn and surrounded by trees, Billy Whittaker felt the sort of satisfaction with this beautiful suburb which he believed he ought to combat in himself; for to him Evanston, however pleasant, meant an abandonment of the road from East Pearson Street to the Drive. He thought of men living here as lacking the ambition or as conscious within themselves of want of ability to

win their way into the front rank of city society. An agreeable position in Evanston satisfied many, of course; he thought of Marjorie's parents as thus satisfied; but he would not let it satisfy Marjorie and himself.

He hunched impatiently forward in his seat as Gregg turned at last into the avenue which led to the Hales'; Gregg swung the car between wide gate posts and, crunching through the newly frozen crust over a private driveway, he came to a stop at a porte-cochère beside a big, brightly lighted, warm-windowed house where a manservant opened the door at the top of a short row of steps. Billy pulled back the catch of the car door before he recollected himself and sat back.

"Get out, Bill," Gregg bade.

"You're running back to the garage?"

"No; just up on the lawn there. I'll not freeze up to-night. Get out."

Billy complied and ran up the steps; Gregg drove on a few yards, where he killed his engine and stepped down, stamping his feet while he gazed up at the big, white, wide-verandahed home of the Hales, always friendly looking and welcoming. Lights shone in warm, inviting colors, and a dancing glow on some of the window-panes told that wood fires were blazing in the drawing-room and in the hall. Gentle currents of the night air wafted down from the chimney the soft odor of wood smoke, and it brought to Gregg memories of an old, rambling, beloved home in Michigan; he thought of his father coming in, tired and mud-spattered from a long drive over winter roads, but smiling, as Gregg always remembered him, when Gregg or Gregg's mother met him at the door. Gregg recollected how he used to go for his father's slippers while

his mother brought a tray of hot supper to the little table before the library fire, whereupon his father would draw her down to him and kiss her.

A great deal of love, always faithful and constant — Gregg liked to feel sure — had made his home. He had always thought of love making pleasant this big, gay home of the Hales; for though he recently had not thought of Mr. and Mrs. Hale loving as his own father and mother did, yet there always appeared to be harmony between them, and a good deal of affection; and they both loved their daughter as she loved them. Marjorie seemed to adore her father, particularly.

He stepped quickly toward the house, where a door was opened and a servant took his things.

"Good evening, Gregg," Mr. Hale's hearty voice welcomed him. "Mighty glad to see you. You came out in the new car to-night, Billy says. How does she act?"

"Why, fine; all right, I guess," said Gregg, giving his hand to the warm, steady clasp of Mr. Hale and feeling an agreeable stir within, as the older man looked at him. Mr. Hale's friendly brown eyes had, as often at a moment of meeting, an expression which seemed to say, "Well, I've not seen you for a day or two; anything happened to you, meanwhile? Apparently not." Gregg always liked that look, and he liked, naturally, the way Marjorie's father always seemed to mention first the subject interesting the other person.

He was almost as tall as Billy, but he had the knack, which Billy lacked, of never impressing his superiority in height over another. To-night, he seemed to be in something even better than his usual good physical trim which he vigorously maintained by golf during three seasons, and by squash or handball every second

day in winter. He was the sort of man who surprised you when you saw him with a grown-up daughter and made one wonder how young he was when he married; as a matter of fact, he had been twenty-four then; so he was forty-seven now; but it was stale flattery to him to say that he did not look it. He had possessed the birthright of a sound, well-formed body and the physical advantage of having been brought up in a none-too-indulgent home in a town in northern Illinois; he had always had to work and, while working, had educated himself. Until he had earned it, he never had had more than enough of anything; and now, by habit, he still worked hard and, in all obvious matters, kept himself in restraint. So his brown eyes were clear and there was no dragged skin in the firm, agreeable lines of his capable face; his brown hair was thick and little gray; his body was free of excess weight. Gregg never quite liked his mouth, which had lips too thick; but his mustache improved them and his mouth was pleasant when he smiled. He had even, almost perfect teeth.

Here was a man certain to understand the risks in anything dangerous which he undertook, Gregg thought; he could be counted upon to protect his family and himself. Yet, if he mistook some element, what a calamity for such a man to be commonly disgraced; and — Gregg thought — what an impossible man to approach on a personal affair.

"Well, Gregg Mowbry, I did manage to get you here!"

Gregg spun about; there was Marjorie. "Nobody like you!" he exulted, almost aloud. He forgot her father; forgot that he had been thinking of her in danger and himself protecting her. He felt only the

little, delightful jump which she always startled in him, which he always expected and which, therefore, he should have been able to discount; but it still surprised him by its sudden lift in him. She spoke quickly yet softly; all alive, she kept herself; and she made you feel more alive, too, however fully alive you had thought yourself the minute before. You could never keep in your memory of her quite that quality of her voice, Gregg found; again it surprised him; and the sight of her surprised him, too.

She was, as always, prettier than he had expected. A silly word, pretty, to run in your mind to describe the cause of the pleasant sensation the sight of Marjorie gave you; for she was never one of those stupid girls whom people call pretty and beautiful. She possessed certain, perfectly definite beauties; like her hair; lovely, very fine hair and very abundant, dark brown in color. She had not bobbed it but, in a fashion which Gregg liked best since he observed it was hers, she wore it dressed low and close about her head; she had a broad, capable forehead, brown, definite brows and blue, pleasant eyes; her mouth was a trifle large, but her lips had none of the thickness of her father's. It was a wholly agreeable, good-tempered mouth suggestive of nothing more disturbing than a disposition to independence and recklessness. Her clear, white skin was one of her best features, and she had beautifully shaped hands, which were strong and well-developed for a girl who had never been obliged to work with them. Her arms were well-shaped and so was all her body. But Gregg seldom thought of her as having a beautiful form; he thought of her as able to do well all sorts of active, interesting things and, by nature, requiring something active, and preferably

a bit dangerous, on which to spend some of her energy. How she liked to get on a clear, country road and, with nobody else in the car, set the motor humming!

She seemed to feel like that to-night and, not being able to drive, she seemed to be finding some excitement in shocking Bill, beside whom she looked smaller and even younger than her twenty-two years. For Billy, when with a girl, had a way of becoming mature, particularly when he was shocked.

It was not difficult for Marjorie to shock Bill, Gregg knew; undoubtedly her new dancing dress was enough to do it. Of course, it was cut low, with only two slim bands of blue silk over her white shoulders; blue and opalescent silk clung to the roundness of her small bosom, bound her slender, supple waist and fell into a skirt of simple, graceful loveliness. Her arms were all bare but for a bracelet of platinum and sapphires; a tiny, glinting chain of platinum with a glistening sapphire was about her smooth, white neck. As she approached, and Billy came with her, Gregg saw that her brows had been darkened a trifle and her lips touched, unnecessarily, with a rouge stick—extra items of usual and fashionable procedure but undoubtedly designed to tease over-proper old Bill, and her greeting to Gregg obviously was part of the same design.

"You managed to get him?" Billy repeated, challenging her.

"Certainly; but I had a terrible time. I wrote him a special note; and then telephoned him twice, besides begging you to bring him; didn't I, Mr. Mowbry?"

"Certainly," Gregg said seriously.

"What?" demanded Billy.

"Oh, Billy," she cried fondly, to let him know she was teasing him; and Gregg laughed a bit foolishly

with Bill. Gone from Gregg was the stuffy feeling, which had taken him an hour ago, that possibly Marjorie Hale wanted him more than she did Billy. Gregg now honestly had no idea how much she wanted him or whether, to Marjorie, he was really no more important than a lip stick, summoned to stir a rouse out of Bill. Billy was appeased and left them together.

"Of course, I wanted you awfully to come, Mr. Mowbry. You see, to-night is a sort of marker for mother in Evanston," Marjorie explained. "Ten years ago this winter father moved us from our Irving Park house of seven rooms on a fifty-foot lot; we had one general housework girl, most of the time; father used to take care of the furnace and carry out the ashes and cut the lawn. This morning, about eleven, mother casually called up Mrs. Severne Thomas Sedgwick and mentioned that she thought she'd have a little informal dinner for the young people and would Clara and Elsie come? Mrs. Sedgwick immediately said, "Certainly." Ten minutes later she got Ethel and George Chaden and Fred Vane. I don't think Fred had to ask his mother to let him come; but if he did, it's safe to say that she told him to come along. Now, the point is this isn't a big, formal affair, where anybody'd look in only from curiosity and without committing themselves to friendship with us. It's just that. Mother's been rather high up about it all day."

"Where've you been?" Gregg asked.

"Oh, miles above all altitude records! Shouldn't I be — when neighbors come in like that, though their fathers inherited most of their stocks and bonds and my father's just earning his for himself? Oh, it seems to me silly for them to have to approve of him; he's worth three of any other men about here; and the

sensible ones know it. He's the real energy and brains in Tri-Lake to-day; he's the reason it's twice as big as it ever was before and increasing when every other business, just about, is dropping down toward the dogs, and there's never a whisper about profiteering and bribe-paying or anything else rotten in Tri-Lake these days. Oh, I'm so proud of him! After mother telephoned him about our party, and who was coming, he brought home this for me." Marjorie touched the sapphire on the chain about her neck.

"It's beautiful," Gregg said, "on you."

"Wait until you see what he brought mother! She got me this dress, which has simply scandalized Billy. Do you think it's so awful?"

Gregg started because she had caught him thinking about it. On another evening, he believed he would not have wondered particularly over it; but to-night the bareness of her slender arms and shoulders and the partial, studied exposure of her rounded, youthful breasts in this new dress which her mother had bought for her gave him a queer feeling. And the queerer because Marjorie was so plainly almost wholly unconscious of the final effect for which such a dress was designed. Whenever Gregg thought about how much a girl like Marjorie "knew," he realized very well that girls to-day "know" almost everything; but he had never thought before how little mere knowledge of itself has to do with nocence or with innocence. Suddenly it struck him that, whatever she might "know," he was standing before the most innocent girl in the world and for her very sophistication far more innocent than girls of the generations before who had been kept wholly ignorant. For they had known that there was a vague, undescribed something to fear; but this girl

of the new innocence, thinking she knew all, feared nothing, suspected nothing, least of all, suspected what she had yet to learn.

"You are beautiful in that dress," Gregg said, too seriously, and swept by a surprisingly overwhelming impulse to seize her as he gazed down at her. "Only a girl like you should wear that."

"You mean I shouldn't, either?"

"I didn't say that."

"No." Suddenly she was fiery red, the hotness spreading from her face down her white throat.

"I like you in it,' Gregg protested quickly. "Bill did, too. What he didn't like was to have ——"

"What, please?"

"Me, and other men, liking you in it."

Marjorie stooped and, picking up a silk scarf from a chair, she threw it about her shoulders. "I'm having it changed to-morrow. I didn't like it myself; but when my own mother arranged it for me, I thought ——" she stopped. "When I got downstairs with it on, and after the fun of Billy's first sight of me, I just had to explain to you that I didn't choose it. You see?"

"Of course," said Gregg.

"It gave father a jog. What I was going to say: I'm awfully glad Billy and you could come; it's helpful to have one or two others about who can remember a father that took care of the furnace, if we're having the Chadens drop in informally for dinner before we all go to the dance."

"Then your father's going to the Lovells' with us?" Gregg asked quickly; ever since entering the house he had been seeking, sub-consciously, some excuse for escape from the task Cuncliffe had forced on him.

"No; it's too bad. He has to go to St. Louis to-night."

"Right after dinner?" Gregg asked, as casually as he could.

"He's starting down town right after dinner. He has to see some one in Chicago before taking the train."

"Oh!" Gregg said slowly. "I see." Then there were sounds at the door and other guests arrived.

CHAPTER III

MRS. HALE planned this informal dinner to be very formal; but her husband turned it as far as possible into a comfortable sort of family affair. He simply could not be stiff with young people whom he liked; he knew the subjects which interested them and talked in a way which started them because he really was interested in those subjects himself. There were ten at the table, two girls and two young men on each side, between Marjorie's father at one end of the board and her mother at the other. Gregg and Billy were on the same side with Marjorie between them, and with Mrs. Hale on the other side of Billy. At Gregg's left was Clara Sedgwick, whom he knew pretty well; she was about Marjorie's age, a light-haired, pleasant looking girl, almost pretty and with that agreeable ease of manner which upbringing in a family of established position gives a girl who has good sense. She talked when she had something to say and listened when she hadn't and never perpetrated those tiresome chatterings called "efforts" and never tried to be clever. Gregg liked her and thought her a nice, easy-going sort of a girl who could always be depended upon for normal, natural feelings and, being conservative, she seemed a good "best friend" for a live one like Marjorie. Across the table was Elsie Sedgwick, who was two years younger than Clara, with the same upbringing but with a quite dissimilar disposition. Elsie was

one of an Evanston set who took social affairs very seriously and who consciously considered the Hales as a little beyond the edge of "acceptance" by their families. Seated between George Chaden and Fred Vane and on the same side of the table with Ethel Chaden, she was with others who more or less felt they were initiating the Hales into society; so there was plenty of vivacious effort on that side.

"The Follies; yes — wasn't that perfectly frightful? — Poiret model. — My dear, I saw her at the Casino and she said. — No; Chick Evans will play — well, it is absolutely certain they are engaged if not quietly married ——"

Gregg could keep in that sort of talk without using his mind at all; usually he did so, but to-night he began thinking about these people who were entertaining him. He noticed that Mr. Hale, having put every one at ease as much as possible, had himself dropped out of the conversation and was contenting himself with following the lively, light-headed talk. Occasionally he seemed to become abstracted and his thought to go far from this table; but a word to him instantly drew him back. He watched his daughter almost continually, and Gregg, watching him, saw his eyes soften with his pride; now and then, in a manner which made Gregg think he was following an old, fond habit, he glanced at his wife and waited till her eyes met his, when he would smile in a way which seemed to say, "This is all pretty good, isn't it?"

One would say — Gregg speculated — that here was a man well satisfied with his family life. If an outsider were to judge from appearances, Mrs. Hale would seem the one discontented with the domestic circle and striving for something else.

In fact, one naturally had to think of Mrs. Hale in terms of progressing to a new position more cultured or secure or more satisfactory, in some manner, from an old situation less so. Frequently, like to-night, she was so obviously in progress that she made you think of her start which had been from Edgewater, in Chicago, when that part of the north shore of the city — which never was really smart — still was where educated and moderately successful men made their homes. When she married Charles Hale, and he took her to Irving Park, this clearly was a step down for her; but you could imagine her reckoning patiently, and correctly, that her husband was sure to enable her to more than better her old position. Now, of course, she had done so; how high was she hoping to go, Gregg wondered, as he glanced at her composed, self-trusting face.

Many people enthusiastically praised Mrs. Hale, appreciating her composure and the competency and the certainty with which she went about anything she had to do. When Gregg suddenly imagined word of Sybil Russell reaching her, he had to think of Mrs. Hale as yet calm; he could not think of her in any other way. But he thought also of her dealing with the circumstance with a thoroughness and relentlessness never approached before.

She was of about medium height and now forty-four years of age. She had dressed herself for this dinner after a fashion which, expressed by any sensuous woman, must have been considered daring; but you could not associate anything daring with Mrs. Hale. The exposure of most of the upper half of her beautifully formed, white body was absolutely without any corresponding consciousness of her body; and so it

left a man like Gregg as cold as though he were observing a perfect statue. Her slender, perfectly kept hand in greeting always conveyed to Gregg cordial interest in him but never gave feeling; certainly never anything of warmth. Her eyes, large and deep blue and thoughtful, also were beautiful without warmth; even her lips, which naturally were full-blooded and red, suggested to Gregg no passion. She was admirable for the moderation in all things which was second nature to her; so she kept herself in excellent health. Gregg had never heard of her "lying down" or as being guilty of headaches such as punished other women who, in spasms of spectacular energy, accomplished much less for others than Mrs. Hale. For when at home, as she had been for several months now, she was perpetually active in her women's clubs, philanthropies, in her church and in civic and cultural movements. She assumed that young people really were concerned with such things, if they were not made ashamed in admitting it; and by enlisting Billy she at length succeeded in turning the table chatter from Dorothy Gish to the work of a hospital committee, of which she was a member; and Gregg learned, consequently, that though she was going to the dance, she was later to attend a meeting of the committee at a neighbor's home.

"It's hardly a step from the club to the Cleves', Charles," she said to her husband, after she had mentioned the meeting. "So it seems ridiculous to keep Leonard out here to run me only half a block. He ought to take you down town to your train."

Mr. Hale started, decisively. "Leonard's business when I am away is to take you where you wish to

go, and to see you safe home again, my dear. I'll take the elevated into the city."

"At least, you'll have Leonard run you to the elevated," his wife persisted.

"Very well."

Mrs. Hale told the butler to instruct the chauffeur to be ready to take Mr. Hale to the elevated train for Chicago, before driving her to the club; a few minutes later, they all arose, and after Mrs. Hale and the girls had left the dining room, Mr. Hale excused himself from the men and went upstairs. Gregg delayed uneasily and then, abruptly leaving Billy and the other two, he went up to a guest room which was open and lit for the use of the men. He was conscious of calling this an attempt to see Mr. Hale privately, though he could not help hoping that he would find no opportunity for words alone with his host. But in a few minutes, Mr. Hale passed the door and saw Gregg, and entered.

He had changed from his evening clothes to a sack suit and he had reverted, also, to his business manner of alert, practical speech.

"Gregg, Billy's told Marjorie and she's mentioned to me that Hartford's making you an offer. Come around and see me before you talk finally to him, will you?"

"Thanks; I'll be glad to," Gregg accepted, flushing; and then, forcing himself on, "You're going to St. Louis to-night?"

He did not mean to make it a challenge; but something of his doubt of the fact of the trip got into his tone.

"Why are you asking?" Mr. Hale said more coldly.

"I was thinking I couldn't see you until next week."

"No," said Hale. "No; of course not." He seemed to suspect that Gregg had something difficult to say to him; and he turned about and closed the door. "What's up, Gregg?"

"Russell," Gregg said; and, having thus forced himself to go on; "It's none of my affair why he's talking about getting you; but I'm to tell you he means more than talk. Don't give him a chance to start anything to-night, sir. If you have to go to St. Louis, wait a while; and then let your own man take you down to the Alton Station."

Watching Marjorie's father, Gregg queerly experienced respect and disrespect for him, together; for mention of Russell's name brought not the slightest disturbance to him. Mr. Hale's control of himself was something to envy; yet Gregg had become certain that he was involved with Russell; and Gregg could no longer give him honor of the doubt of that which he previously had thought true, and yet which had been, until now, only hearsay.

Hale was studying Gregg silently. "Thank you, Mowbry," he said at last, neither by tone nor word admitting nor denying that he understood the warning. "I appreciate your thought for me. Don't worry about me, now or later."

He turned briskly and opened the door; a minute later, Gregg heard him saying good-by to his wife in the hall. She mentioned some matter which he told her not to bother herself about, but to leave for him to attend to upon his return. He kissed her; she spoke to him, fondly, and she went downstairs. Then Marjorie came from her room and whispered to him,

and Gregg heard him laugh but forbid her, saying, "Don't do that, Sweetness."

"Why not?"

"Why, it's all right enough; but I'm afraid it will worry your mother; you must not worry your mother."

"All right, then; I won't. 'Night, Daddy." Marjorie started away, and then, impulsively, came back.

"Father, dear."

"Marjey."

"You're so fine! I love you so!"

"I like my girl. Kiss me, Marjey. Now, you're going to change that dress to-morrow and keep that scarf with you to-night."

"Yes; father, did you speak to Gregg?"

"I told him to come see me before closing any deal with Hartford."

"Then you don't want him to go with Mr. Hartford?"

"He mustn't be a changer; the boy mustn't spoil his life."

A moment later Gregg heard Mr. Hale downstairs saying good night to his guests; the front door opened and closed; outside a car started and Gregg knew that he was gone. Probably in about forty minutes he would reach that flat building, next to the one where Cuncliffe's Nyman lived and where Russell would be awaiting him; and Gregg, going back over his few words with Mr. Hale and recollecting his tone and manner, began to realize that Mr. Hale was bound there to-night because he had known that Russell was waiting for him; to-night he was departing, not with a purpose of further betraying this home, but to attempt to guard it from the consequences of what he already had done. And he knew that involved dangers.

Gregg went downstairs where he found the girls in their coats. "If we really want to dance, we'd better go over right away," Marjorie said. "It's at the club, but everybody will be there to-night and the floor will be perfectly impossible pretty soon."

"I'll take you and Bill over," Gregg offered Marjorie.

"Oh, Fred Vane's room for us in his machine."

"I'll take my bus, anyway," Gregg insisted. "I've not too much dope in the radiator; it needs heating up."

He wanted his car with him this night; so he took Marjorie and Billy in with him.

As other cars crowded the road, Gregg had to halt in the avenue when he came from the Hale's driveway, and Marjorie bent forward beside him and looked back at the lighted windows of her home beyond the black boughs of the trees, and with the yellow glow on the snow. The night had cleared to crisp, still winter, with stars glinting in the deep blue above the white roof; and it all made a picture of peace and contentment, such as children form in their first-heard poems of home life, and see in their pictures of a happy family home.

"I love that place," Marjorie whispered impulsively.

"It's a wonderful home, Marjorie," Billy agreed emotionally.

Gregg took out his cigarette case. "Mind if I smoke?"

Marjorie straightened. "Of course not; give me one."

"Have one, Bill?" Gregg offered.

"No," Billy refused, emphatically.

He never smoked when Marjorie did; and Gregg, holding a light for her, considered that he had never seen her smoke except before Billy. He doubted whether she really liked it.

"Billy, you're almost as bad about my vices as father," she teased him gently.

"You don't smoke before him any more," Billy returned.

"No; neither does mother. Poor mother, she tried it; and I think it's the one thing she's tried which she hasn't succeeded in doing."

"A pipe is the real smart thing now, Marjorie," Billy suggested, with heavy sarcasm.

Gregg left them at the door of the club and put up his car at the end of a row in the street, where he could get it out quickly. When he entered the club and went to the dancing floor, the orchestra was playing a fox trot; he found Ethel Chaden and danced with her; and the warm liveliness of the ballroom, the lilt to the music and the quick step, the sudden chatter and hand-clapping all about, when the music stopped; the nods and words back and forth with girls and men he knew, and now the music and dance again, shook Gregg out of the doldrums he had dropped into. He danced with Clara Sedgwick, then fox-trotted with Elsie; he got Marjorie away from Bill for a one step, and danced again with Ethel Chaden; and it was not until some time after Mrs. Hale appeared on the floor, and Gregg went over to sit out a dance with her, that he let himself get to thinking once more.

Mrs. Hale frequently gave dances and always attended, at least for a short time, the dances to which she was invited; but she did not much care to dance herself; she seemed to value the music and the liveliness

chiefly as an invigorating accompaniment for talk about matters that interested her. As the orchestra started playing a slow waltz measure to the Barcarolle from "The Tales of Hoffman," she described to Gregg an innovation in hospital architecture which she had observed during her visit to Paris in the fall. She hoped to have it copied at "her" hospital in Chicago before she returned to France in the spring. She expected to take her daughter with her, and this time stop in Brittany for several months. She said it was too bad that Mr. Hale's business never would permit him to do more than take her across the ocean.

Mr. Hale — Gregg suddenly thought — by this time must be approaching that building next to Nyman's. Then Gregg drove his thoughts away, listening and mechanically replying to Mrs. Hale while he lost himself in the mood of the dance rhythm which seemed to have no effect on her at all.

These are passionate, caressing measures of Offenbach's; and they stirred Gregg to respond to their slow surge in dance; they made him long, not just for a partner within his arm and responding with him, but for one girl alone — for Marjorie. Since he could not have her for this waltz, he was glad that he was not dancing; then, while watching the floor, he saw Billy dancing with Marjorie; saw they had made up their little, teasing differences of the evening and were whispering intimately together as they danced with Billy's head bent over hers. Gregg could not get a good look at Marjorie's face, but he saw her cheek was flushed; and Billy was red.

She had been keeping her scarf about her bare shoulders; but now it slipped, and Gregg saw Billy catch it, and he drew it back over her arms with a

new gesture so possessive that it shot a quick start through Gregg.

"Bill's!" he cried to himself, sharply. "Bill wouldn't touch her that way unless he has her. Bill's! She's Bill's!" For a moment he could feel nothing; then he tried to pull himself together and argue!

"Well, that's good, isn't it? Bill had to have her; and Bill — he's the marrying kind; he'll give her a home; make one for her; and keep it clean, too. That's what she wants, of course; a home — like hers; like what she thinks it is; and a damn good steady husband she can depend on; Bill! Now I — I'd be a bird for her, wouldn't I? I know; so I don't care — damn it, I don't care. She's just the girl I like a lot just now; an awfully good fellow. But there's more. That's a rotten lie; no one like her; never was; never will be; no one to look at you in just her way; and speak, her way, right at *you;* into *you.* She'll still do that, of course; I'll see her — a lot, if I'm not a damned quitter. She'll be Bill's."

He had never before that moment actually thought of that; and it brought him up short with a start which must have been visible. But the music stopped just then; there was the storm of clapping for an encore; the music was sure to start again, but Marjorie and Billy were leaving the floor. Gregg soon lost sight of Marjorie in the crowd and, in a minute, even Billy's tall head disappeared and Gregg knew they had reached the stairs.

Mrs. Hale had failed to observe them dancing, and now she did not miss them; she wanted to know which of the Raphaels in the Louvre Gregg preferred. He was entirely innocent of the fact that Raphaels belonged in the Louvre, which he had never attempted to

visit on his furloughs from the Argonne; but he remembered that Billy had, and reported that all the great paintings had been stored during the war. So Gregg reminded Mrs. Hale of this. She said, "Of course; how stupid of me. It is half-past nine now; and I am saying good night to Mrs. Lovell and I will go to my committee. Tell my daughter, if I do not see her, that I will return home directly from Mrs. Cleve's."

So Gregg saw her to her car and afterwards stayed downstairs and smoked a cigarette, before returning to the dancing floor for his number with Marjorie, because he expected her to be late for that dance, if she appeared at all; and, in fact, he had gone upstairs and the encore was playing before he saw her hurrying in.

"Please forgive me; Billy and I were having a long talk," she admitted frankly, flushed to a warm excitement which made Gregg press his lips tightly, as he put his arm about her and they began to dance.

"Bill's," he repeated to himself. "Or, almost Bill's." He clung to an idea that possibly the long talk between Marjorie and Bill had not come to a conclusion; possibly they had been interrupted; possibly there had seemed more delight in waiting for a consummation at some better time or place; possibly she had been unwilling, even in her happiness, to do him the rudeness of cutting a dance. Gregg seldom had the sensation of dancing with a girl and realizing that she was absorbed in thoughts of some other man; but he now had that experience. "I beg your pardon."

"Oh, it was my fault."

She, who usually danced perfectly, had lost step for the evident reason that Billy, with another girl, had passed.

"Oh, mother's gone?" Marjorie asked, making an effort to talk.

"Just now, to the Cleves'. She said to tell you she's going home from there."

"That'll be long after we get back. She's determined to put her improvement scheme through her committee to-night; a couple of the other members won't have it, and she'll keep them all there until she succeeds."

"She will?"

"She always does; her determination is simply — appalling. It's awfully inconvenient sometimes; but I admire her for it. I didn't want you to think from the way I spoke about mother buying my dress that I was criticizing her. I only meant her ideas aren't mine, on some things. I'm mostly like father; we've always been particular pals."

The encore ended and Marjorie, in looking for Billy, forgot what she had been saying. Every one was clapping and the music resumed; so Gregg was offering again to dance, when he heard some one saying:

"Miss Hale! Excuse me, Miss Hale!" and they turned and faced a club servant.

"Some one wants Mrs. Hale on the telephone," the man explained. "I can't find her, Miss Hale; and the lady said it was very important."

"Oh, mother's gone to Mrs. Cleve's, tell her," Marjorie said; and the man turned away. "Shall we dance now?" she said to Gregg.

He recollected himself. "Yes; please."

"That probably was one of mother's patient committee."

"Probably," Gregg said; but the fear which had come to him in his car, on the way from Pearson Street,

made him slow. He could not help watching the stair and soon saw the servant reappear and look about the hall for them.

"Will you come to the telephone, Miss Hale?" the man asked. "I told the lady that Miss Hale said her mother had gone to Mrs. Cleve's, and the lady said that she couldn't look up another number; if Miss Hale was here, she must speak with her at once."

"I'll come," Marjorie said, suddenly pale. For the servant had communicated to her alarm which he had received from "the lady" on the telephone. "You needn't come down," Marjorie said to Gregg; she was looking about for Billy, but, not finding him at once, she did not wait; Gregg went downstairs with her to the booth, and as he heard her make reply he knew that the thing he feared had happened; but, of course, knowledge of it could come to her only slowly.

"Yes; I am Miss Hale — the daughter of Charles Hale; yes," he heard her reply steadily. "My father went down to take the Alton train to St. Louis. No; he did not go there directly; he had an engagement first. I don't know where ——" her voice was beginning to break, and Gregg clenched his hands tight while he waited. No one was about that end of the hall but the servant who had summoned them, and Gregg ordered him away.

"What has happened to my father? Where is he?" Gregg heard Marjorie's voice crying. "I don't know where he is, or of course I would tell you. I want to know where he is, myself. What do you know about him? What ——"

Gregg pulled open the door of the booth, and as Marjorie turned about with the instrument in her hand

and stared up at him, he attempted to take the telephone from her.

"Let me talk to them," he begged.

But the voice at the other end was speaking and Marjorie was hearing something which made her grip the telephone in a spasm of terror; the voice ceased, and she could not reply. Gregg saw her try to speak, but her lips failed; she looked up at him. "Where's Veerage Street?" she cried to him.

"What?"

"Veerage Street, Gregg!"

"Never heard of it; why? Who's there?"

"Father! He's injured; at 4689 Veerage Street. They've sent for Doctor Grantham for him."

Gregg reached down and took the telephone from her trembling hands, and he said into the mouthpiece, "Hold the line a moment, please." A woman's voice said, "Very well," and Gregg placed the telephone on the stand with the receiver off the hook. "Come out, Marjorie," he begged. "I'll talk to them." He backed from the booth and Marjorie caught at the side of the doorframe, and pulled herself up and faced him.

"Who was that calling?" Gregg demanded of her.

"Doctor Grantham's office; the one at his house; the girl who stays there and takes his calls was talking to me, Gregg."

"Yes, go on," said Gregg. What she had told him, had been almost a relief; he had feared she might have been hearing more directly.

"Doctor Grantham is the surgeon, a friend of father's."

"I know Grantham," Gregg assured.

"Gregg!" She grasped the lapels of his coat with both her hands and clung to him in her sudden break

from self-control. "Something serious has happened to father! Some one — a woman's voice it was — called Doctor Grantham's home a few minutes ago. She begged Doctor Grantham to come at once to father at 4689 Veerage Street, third apartment; she said it was a case of life or death and for the doctor to come with his instruments. Doctor Grantham wasn't home; but the girl knew where he was. She called him and he's on the way home for his instruments, and he told her to look up Veerage Street for him. He didn't know it; the girl couldn't find it in the guide, so she called our house. That's all they know!"

Gregg took her hands and led her to a chair. By a mercy, the encore to the last dance had been long, the intermission short, and now another dance was playing so that no one else was about that end of the lower floor. "Stay here, Marjorie," he begged compassionately, "I'll talk to her and see if I can find out anything else."

Her cold fingers clasped convulsively on his before she relaxed and let him go; she gazed into his eyes, but his now avoided hers; Gregg was trying to think at the same moment of all sides and bearings of this which had come; which, indeed, he had expected to come, and yet which presented itself now suddenly with amazing and unthought-of complexities. He entered the telephone booth and shut the door; but instead of taking up the receiver, he opened the directory at R and swiftly ran down the column of Russells, finding no one listed with an address on Veerage Street; but a Mrs. S. Russell was residing at 4689 Clearedge Street. Gregg jerked and look up Nyman; yes, there was one at 4687 Clearedge Street. There was no longer any

doubt whatever of the nature of the disaster to Charles Hale.

Gregg took up the telephone. "Doctor Grantham's office?"

"Yes."

"Is the doctor there?"

"He is just coming in."

"Tell him the right address is Clearedge Street — 4689." Gregg started to hang up the receiver, but could not. "And tell him for God's sake to get there quick!" Gregg cried in sudden bewilderment with himself, then he hung up and pushed the door to feel weight against it, and he knew that Marjorie had been just outside. She stepped back and let him out.

"How did you know that?" she said, trembling.

Gregg thought as quickly as he could. "The man your father had to see to-night lives there."

She suspected nothing of the truth, Gregg felt; only her terrible anxiety for her father, in order to be sure to get medical aid at once, was making her question.

"Your father mentioned his name to me. I looked it up just now; that was the address."

"Oh, I see. Then — then I can call him. I can find out what's happened; how father is. What's his name, Gregg? The number!"

Gregg stepped before her, blocking her away from the telephone booth till he had glanced in and made sure that he had closed the directory. "No, that wouldn't do any good," he denied her. "The doctor's on his way there now, Marjorie," he pleaded. "He came in when I was speaking."

"Why, Gregg! Mr. Mowbry; you're going to tell

me the number. Of course you are; my father's there; injured ——"

"Marjorie, later I'll call up, when the doctor can have got there." Of course he was struggling only to spare her, but he filled her with greater fear.

"Gregg, did that girl tell you that father is — dying?"

"No; no, Marjorie. Just what you know."

"Then you'll tell me the name where he is! It's too senseless, Gregg; I'm not a child." Then she suddenly defied him. "Why do you suppose you can keep me from my father? I know the address; 4689 Clearedge Street. I could make 'information' give me the number there. But I shan't; it'll take too long. I'll go there; where's Billy?"

She looked about, with an effort of memory recalling where they were and what they had been doing. Music and the quick rhythm of the dance came from above and Marjorie gathered herself and made a determined start for the stairs.

Gregg caught her wrist and turned her to him, while he pleaded, "Wait here, Marjorie. I'll bring Bill down. You mustn't go upstairs looking like that."

"You will get him?" she challenged him, directly.

"Yes," he promised.

"All right; I'll stay here. I must call Leonard, anyway, and get him to come back here now; and I suppose I must call mother and give her some sort of warning; poor mother."

Gregg's clasp on her wrist tightened. "Don't!" he said.

"Not call mother? Oh, of course, I'd rather not just yet — till we know more. I'll just call Leonard, then."

"No; you mustn't do even that!"

"Why not? Gregg, I'm going to my father."

"Let Bill and me go for you, Marjorie."

"And I stay here when he's —— Gregg, let go of me! I must call Leonard; and if I can't find him, I'll borrow Mrs. Chaden's car."

She wrenched her arm from him and he realized he could not physically struggle with her there; yet, unless he stopped her, in a moment she would tell other people and start for her father with them.

"Just wait here, Marjorie. I'll bring Bill down," Gregg offered a promise. "Then, if you will go, we'll take you to your father."

She accepted it for a promise. "You'll hurry, won't you? But don't let any one know anything's wrong, Gregg."

"Of course not."

He endeavored to wander on to the dance floor as casually as usual, but he found himself gazing at friends stupidly and staring at strangers. He could not think about these people; what a blow had struck Marjorie and, unless he could save her, what another was in store for her this night! The idea of it made him first hopelessly weak and then made him feel frantically strong. He felt like rushing down to her again and seizing her in his arms and holding her to him away from every one and everything else and bearing her far, far off. But that wild sensation, of course, was silly.

Suddenly he saw Bill's tall, blond head above the others; and Gregg's shoulders shuddered up. He hadn't been able to think of the blow this would be to Bill; he did not know, until this moment, how much he loved old Bill's idealism and the simple faiths about which he

teased Bill; he had not known how he wanted Bill to keep them; why, they *were* Bill.

A flourish of the drums and saxophone warned that the dance was ending, and Gregg slipped to the side of the floor where that blond head was turning.

"Hello, Gregg," Bill hailed, happily. "Where've you been sitting out with Marjorie?"

"Telephone call; can you come downstairs?" Gregg replied. He led Billy, not to the telephone near which Marjorie was waiting, but to a corner of the coat room.

"See here, Gregg, what's up?" Billy demanded, fully aware now that Gregg had some serious communication.

"Bill, Mr. Hale's been hurt."

"Heh? Where? How? Gregg, where's Marjorie; does she know it?"

"Yes, old fellow. I was with her when she found out. She's going to need you to-night about as much as possible — maybe."

"Good Lord! Gregg, her father's not dead?"

"I don't know; she doesn't either. No one here does."

"What was it? Street hold up? Taxi accident? How did you hear?"

"When some one sent for Doctor Grantham. This way:" and as unemotionally as he could, Gregg related how the call had come, while Billy went white and his eyes were wet when Gregg told him how Marjorie heard.

"The poor little girl, Gregg! Where's she now?"

"Hush! Wait!" Gregg seized his sleeve and held him. "You understand the doctor's girl bungled the address; Marjorie didn't know where her father had gone; so I had to tell the doctor."

"I see; good you knew, Gregg. I'm going to Marjorie."

Gregg grasped Bill's sleeve and held him, but was unable to say anything more for he saw that Billy suspected nothing; and if he tried here and now to tell the whole truth to Bill, what a smash he would make of any chance he had of guarding Marjorie! Whatever else might happen, to tell Billy now was simply impossible; for Billy at first would be knocked out absolutely flat, just as Jim Cuncliffe had said; he would be useless and worse than useless to Marjorie at this moment; and then, he would try to take the affair into his own hands. No, to tell Bill was impossible.

Yet Billy must go with them; there would be no way to avoid that. And if he delayed Billy here much longer, Marjorie would come upstairs looking for him.

"What is it, Gregg?" Billy demanded.

"I'm taking you in my car," Gregg replied, weakly. "You get your coat and send for Marjorie's. It's better not to say anything to anybody and not to let her, till we find out just how things are. You see?"

"Of course."

"All right. I'll be at the door for you in five minutes."

CHAPTER IV

MARJORIE already had obtained her cloak and had put it on and also had her carriage boots over her slippers when Billy found her at the end of the empty room where Gregg had left her. Billy had put on his overcoat and was carrying his hat, which he thrust on his head as he came to Marjorie, so he could give her both his hands.

"Gregg's told you," Marjorie said quietly, but her hands were quivering as he seized them and attempted vainly to reassure her.

"Yes." Billy released her hands and suddenly enfolded her in his big arms, drawing her against him. "Oh, Marjorie!" he whispered.

"Father will be all right, Billy!" she gasped, tears blurring her eyes. "We'll not lose him. Did Gregg tell you the telephone number?"

"No. He's gone to get his car. He'll take us right there, Marjorie."

"That's best, of course," Marjorie accepted, releasing herself from him. "Gregg must be ready now, Billy."

She started abruptly for the door and he followed, confused a little as people now were pouring down the stairs and seeing them. But Marjorie paid no attention to them, and Billy overtook her just as a boy drew back the door to the carriage steps, outside which Gregg's car stood.

Marjorie looked about, saw Billy behind her and,

remembering her argument with Gregg, she leaned forward toward the car and asked Gregg directly, "You'll take me to father?"

"Yes," Gregg said; and she got in beside him; Billy pushed in next her and closed the door.

"I suppose it was an automobile accident," Marjorie said a few minutes after they had started.

"Yes," said Billy. "The roads are all ice tonight."

"Maybe," Gregg objected. "But likely enough a hold-up, I'm afraid. They're at it every night in the city; and your father's not a man just to put his hands up."

"No," said Marjorie with pitiful pride, shuddering.

Billy put his arms about her; he was instantly angry at Gregg for describing a more serious event when she might have been satisfied with imagining some minor injury from a skidding car.

Gregg suggested nothing more; he had felt that this was a good moment to prepare Marjorie to innocently explain to herself the sort of injury to her father which he expected they would find; but he did not dare go beyond that.

Marjorie soon relaxed and let herself lie against Billy and she tried not to think and fear; she needed the feeling of strength and protection about her — Gregg knew — since that voice over the telephone had told her that the strength and love, which had guarded her all her life, was in danger of slipping away. Gregg ached to offer her his strength; he gripped, tense and tight, to the steering wheel to keep his hands from her; he dared not even touch her now that Billy had his arm about her; Gregg feared, if he did anything at all, he would thrust Bill from her and take her for himself.

"It's the first time anything's happened to father," Marjorie said. "I've never known him to be even sick before."

"He'll come through this, dear little girl," Billy encouraged her. But for a while she only became more frightened.

Gregg, keeping to himself and trying not to think too much about her, heard her whispering, "Spare father!" It was a sort of a prayer.

Then Billy gathered her hands within his own and, bending, kissed hers tenderly. "Dear, dear little Marjorie," he said again, "I'll see that everything possible is done." It seemed to him that somehow, with his size and strength, he could stand between her and anything.

But Gregg was letting himself lapse to no illusions of what might come up to him in a few minutes now; and, as he thought of it, the idea that Marjorie's father might be dead seemed to him a simple event to deal with — provided the fact of his death was all that Marjorie must learn. But he knew that the chances were that, by this time, Charles Hale's private affairs had become public property and that when Marjorie and Billy and he arrived at Clearedge Street, they would find a crowd of curious, babbling people about the building where Mrs. Russell lived; they would find a police ambulance and officers; reporters and flash-light photographers. In that case — well, there was nothing that he could do; nothing that any one could do.

But if it were not yet known, he might be of some use; and the fact that the woman who had sent for the doctor for Mr. Hale had not called a local surgeon, but had summoned Doctor Grantham from far away,

gave Gregg ground for hoping that she might have concealed what had happened.

Gregg lit a cigarette and, without looking about, he extended his case toward Marjorie and Bill.

Marjorie ignored it; in a moment she released herself from Billy and sat up in a reaction from her deepest fears; she spoke almost with confidence that they would find her father in no real danger. "He's always been so strong," she said; and she busied herself with the small consequences of their flight from the dance.

"Billy, did you make any explanation to Mrs. Lovell?"

"No; sorry. I didn't see her."

"There's such a mob to-night she'll never miss us. I'll call her and explain, after we've found that father's going to be all right."

They were reaching the gay, garishly lit area of refreshment places, resplendent drug stores and motion-picture palaces from which people were pouring from the last show; they passed the tall new apartment hotels and flat buildings converted into hotels and turned into a transverse street of similar character; then Gregg turned again and drove up a darker, more quiet and respectable looking street with a big block of small apartments on the corner and with six flat structures beyond. Gregg stared ahead down the street. It was all quiet, thank God! No lights but the ordinary street lamps; no cars but a single one, with red tail-light, at the curb; nobody about but a man or two walking along in an ordinary way.

Gregg took a long breath and went on more slowly, almost to the end of the block, where he saw 4689 in the transom over the door of a good-looking, three-apartment building which stood separated by eight or

ten feet from the flats on both sides. The first floor was lighted; the second dark; the third lighted. The car with red tail-light was standing before this number and a chauffeur in uniform paced up and down, striking his hands together in the cold. Gregg drew up behind the waiting car and Billy got out, helped Marjorie out and clasped her arm as she turned toward the building. The chauffeur approached them; and Marjorie said:

"You're Doctor Grantham's driver?"

"Yes."

"I'm Miss Hale; do you know how my father is?"

"No, miss."

"How long has the doctor been here?"

"About fifteen minutes."

"Which flat are they in?"

"The third floor, miss."

Marjorie made for the building. "You coming?" she called nervously to Gregg, who was still in the car, leaning forward.

"Lost my wheel key," Gregg said; and Billy impatiently left Marjorie and stepped back to him.

"You take her in that front door, Bill; ring there and wait," Gregg directed. "Don't disturb anybody else if they don't let you in at once. Maybe they're operating on him now."

"What're you going to do?"

"I'm going around the back and try to find out what's happened and how he is. Maybe, if it's bad, I'd better try to prepare ——"

Billy's big frame was shaking visibly. "Maybe, Gregg," he agreed. "I understand. All right." He hurried toward the building to catch Marjorie who, unable to wait, was opening the entrance door.

Gregg jumped down and took the narrow walk to the rear of the building; finding there the usual, outside stair to a tier of three back porches, he ran up to the third and found himself outside an ordinary back door of deal, with a glass pane in the upper half. A light was burning on the other side but a yellow blind had been pulled down over the glass. He heard a buzzer, undoubtedly rung by Marjorie and Billy at the front entrance. No one seemed to make reply; indeed, there was no other sound from the apartment and when Gregg pressed the button beside the door, he merely set going another buzzer without rousing response; so he tried the knob and found, as he expected, that the door was locked. A window a few feet off at the end of the porch also was locked and its shade was down. Gregg returned to the door and pounded upon it, still receiving no response and hearing only the continued signal from the vestibule bell. So he picked up an empty milk bottle from the porch and struck it through the pane above the knob and reached in, unbolted the door, opened it and stepped into the kitchen. He had closed the door behind him and advanced half-way across the room before a swinging door on the other side was pushed open and a young woman appeared.

She was quivering with fright and her eyes were red from crying; but Gregg hardly thought of her state. For the instant, indeed, he was not chiefly anxious as to whether Charles Hale was living or dead. What was above everything else to him at that moment was the type of woman he found here; and his pulse leaped with relief at what he saw. He had not been simple enough to suppose that all women, who lived like Mrs. Russell, showed themselves for what they

were; of course he knew some did, but this girl did not.

At his first glance at her, there seemed absolutely nothing about her to suggest any irregularity or abnormality in her code of conduct; she was a decidedly good-looking woman, probably less than thirty, with regular, definite features, with brown eyes and attractive brown hair, which was evidently all her own; and its color was its own, Gregg estimated; and she was without rouge or even lip dye. There was, indeed, no suggestion of the blondining or artificial make-up about her which, in the minds of innocents, marks the jade; there was not even noticeable weakness or pliability of nature or voluptousness of figure. She had a good figure but Gregg would not have immediately commented it, if he were not so consciously valuing her; for she had nothing of the habit of obtruding physical charms. "There is an independent and competent girl," one would have first thought, casually meeting her. She looked like one preferring and accustomed to live by her brain rather than by her body.

She was dressed more than decently — more than modestly, in fact; for she was wearing a brown, woolen gown, high in the neck; a dress of the sort that Marjorie and her friends wore about their own homes in afternoons when nothing in particular was going on. While Gregg was making this survey of her, she was looking over him and now, clenching her hands, "Who are you?" she demanded. "What do you mean by breaking in here?"

"I'm a friend of Mr. Hale's. My name's Mowbry. How is he?"

"How?" she repeated, retreating a little as Gregg boldly advanced. Whether or not she might have

heard his name and now recognized him, Gregg could not tell; but something about his reply partially reassured her.

"Is he living?" Gregg demanded of her, definitely. "Or is he dead?"

"He's living," she replied, her mind now able to go back from the inspection of this stranger to the man she was trying to protect.

"But badly hurt?"

"Very badly," she said in such a whisper that Gregg's voice, too, went lower.

"I see," he said, quietly. "Who are you, please?"

"I?" Her mind had not come back to herself and Gregg again.

"I mean are you Sybil Russell?"

"Yes; I am."

"Who else is here?"

"Doctor Grantham and his assistant."

"A man?"

"Yes; another man."

"Nobody else?"

"No. They're in there together," she jerked her head vaguely behind her.

Gregg stepped closer to her; she started again to retreat but did not and stood holding the door open and half supporting herself by it. Behind her was a dining room with a heavy, handsome rug and a walnut table, — Sheraton, though Gregg recognized only that it was of good design; over it was a light shaded by a Tiffany bowl and showing a sideboard and chairs of the same pleasing design as the table; a Japanese bird cage with a canary hung before a window. No one was in the room; and no voice was audible from

elsewhere in the apartment. But the buzzer in the kitchen rang again and again.

"What's happened here?" Gregg demanded of Mrs. Russell.

"He shot him!"

"Who?"

"George."

"You mean George Russell who was your husband?"

She nodded, her hand tightening convulsively in her grip of the door.

"Then what did he do?"

"He got out! I don't know anything more than that!"

"Where did he shoot him?"

She put a hand to her breast.

"Where were they?" Gregg pressed on.

"In front."

"Outside?"

"No; in the living room. He'd just come ——"

"Mr. Hale, you mean?"

"Yes; George was waiting for him here."

"You knew that?"

"Yes; he'd come in with me, George had. I thought I'd better bring him in. I thought I could do something with him in here. I was trying to; I think I could have but just at the wrong minute, Charles came."

Gregg winced and she saw it and stopped.

"Go on," he commanded.

"He tried to interfere for me, Charles did. He thought George would hurt me. I could look out for myself. I had; but Charles ——"

The buzzer was sounding almost continuously and

Gregg's thought jumped to Marjorie, pressing the bell and listening for response.

"Never mind! Did they hear the shot downstairs?"

"Those people are away."

"Did any one else?"

"Nobody seemed to."

"All right." Gregg stepped forward and passed her and went through the dining room to the hall, where he found a bedroom door open; he glanced in and saw two men in shirt sleeves working over Mr. Hale, who was lying in bed with the upper part of his body bared. Neither the man whom Gregg recognized as Doctor Grantham nor the other looked up and Gregg immediately went on to the living room.

This was a large room with a hardwood floor almost completely covered by Oriental rugs of quiet patterns and furnished with a pretty table in dark mahogany, a lounge and chairs and a woman's writing desk, closed; with a graceful, small grand piano and bench. The lighting was from large, shaded lamps in soft colors; and there were a few — and only a few — good etchings on the walls; altogether it was an agreeable, pleasant room in good, quiet taste, Gregg observed, while he searched for signs of the attack which had been made there. Mrs. Russell followed him and aided him by staring with a shudder at stains on one of the rugs near the piano. Gregg pulled up this rug, pushed others about to cover the place and carried the stained rug to a closet off the hall and thrust it in.

"Do you see anything else to be got out?" he demanded of Mrs. Russell.

"No," she said, staring at him; then, dully, she asked, "Why?"

"Mr. Hale's daughter is below at the front; that is she ringing."

"Oh!"

"She has to come up. There is no way to stop her, without making things worse than they are. But she must not know what has happened here. You can understand that."

"Yes," Mrs. Russell said.

Doctor Grantham appeared behind her; he had put on his coat and it was evident that he had done for his patient all that he could do.

"How is he, doctor?" Gregg asked.

"He is unconscious. We have a chance to keep life in him," Grantham jerked in his abrupt, practical way. "But we must get him to an operating room. I've sent for an ambulance. Who do you say is downstairs? Marjorie?"

"Yes, doctor."

Grantham looked Gregg over; the doctor had no doubt of what he had to do; he questioned only the discretion of Gregg, whom he challenged:

"I've seen you at the Hales'; what's your name?"

"Mowbry; I'm the one who talked from Evanston to your girl. I happened to know Mr. Hale was here," Gregg explained himself. "Marjorie, of course, didn't. Whittaker, who's engaged to her, is with her. He doesn't know anything about this. Does your assistant know Marjorie?"

"Carson?" said the doctor. "No."

"Would she know him?"

"I don't think so. Why?"

"Then can't he be Russell for a few minutes? You see what I mean, doctor. They've got to come up, or they'll surely find out. Doctor, Mr. Hale told them

he was going down to meet a man on business; that must be Russell. Your assistant, Carson, is he. He and his wife were out; they'd been out for dinner; they were just coming back when they met Mr. Hale outside and Russell — that's Carson — brought him up here to talk business. They all came up together. The flat here was empty; there was a man in it; they surprised him when they came in with their key. He tried to get out the rear and Mr. Hale and Russell — that's Carson — chased him; he had to shoot to get away and he shot Mr. Hale. Oh, it's full of holes, doctor; I know it. But something like that's got to do! You'll try it, sir! Marjorie won't be able to think much; maybe we can put it over together! Anyway, I've got to go down and let them in now, or no one knows what they'll do."

Gregg opened the front door and ran down the two flights of stairs to the vestibule. Billy had begun to pound upon the door to the stairway; he had succeeded, indeed, in rousing the people in the first-floor apartment; for their door opened as Gregg came by, but it closed again at once. Billy, seeing Gregg, stopped knocking; he stepped back a little and put his arm about Marjorie. Gregg opened the door.

"He's alive, Marjorie," he said to her, almost steadily. "Everybody up there was busy. Doctor Grantham and Russell and his wife. That's why nobody could answer till I got in the back way."

"What was it, Gregg?" she demanded of him.

They were all on the stairs now. Of course Marjorie could think of nothing else but the injury to her father; now she could not question anything he should say; but he realized that everything he said

would stick in her mind, however completely she might ignore impressions at this moment.

"A bullet wound, Marjorie. A man fired at him; a man who was in the apartment up there."

So far he was safe; or, at least, if this were not safe to tell her, there was no way for him to do better. For those were facts which, in an instant, she must learn. And he could not think again whether the rest of his story for her would hold with her later; he had to give some explanation immediately and, having nothing better, he gave it as they all ran up the stairs.

"Your father'd come down here to see Mr. Russell, Marjorie, you see. He was stopping in here to see him on business before taking the train. Mr. and Mrs. Russell had been out. He met them just as they were coming back; they all came in together. They found a man in the flat; your father and Russell went for him and he fired."

Gregg saved his breath; they were at the door of the third apartment which Gregg had left unlatched behind him. They went in and Marjorie was grasping Doctor Grantham; in a moment she was in the room with her father. Billy went with her; but Gregg did not. He dropped back into the living room and stood there, intending not to hear; but he did hear Marjorie trying to speak to her father. Her father, of course, was still unconscious; he could not hear. Best for him, Gregg thought; for Gregg, himself, went weak and sick. He had not known, until this moment, how much Marjorie loved her father; likely enough, he thought, she had not realized it herself until now. She would not have. Nothing had ever happened to him before, she had said; she had never known him even sick; and now to find him dying, probably! That fine,

big, happy, strong man who was her father! Faith in him and unsuspicion; why they were so absolute and natural to her that she could not even be aware of them. For her to think of herself trusting her father was to hold an idea of the possibility of the opposite which never could have occurred to her.

"Father!" Gregg had to hear again her sweet, steady voice. She made it steady when speaking to her father; she would! And the sweetness of it seemed to halt Gregg's heart. "It's Marjorie, father, dear; I'm here now, father — father ——" Then, "I know he doesn't hear me, doctor. I know; but ——" her voice almost broke; and no one else spoke. She was kissing her father, Gregg knew, for a sob broke from Billy; and Grantham had to clear his throat.

"Come now; come now," Billy managed in a minute.

Billy brought her out of the bedroom and Gregg jerked himself together. "Doctor Grantham's sent for an ambulance to take him to a hospital," he said cheerfully. "It ought to be here any minute now."

"What hospital?" Marjorie asked.

"St. Luke's, I suppose," Gregg replied, watching her. She was gazing about the room but not critically or even wonderingly. He felt sure she was not thinking about the apartment at all; or about Mr. and Mrs. Russell who, she supposed, inhabited it; her eyes merely wandered absently. She still was thinking wholly of her father and now, after the shock of seeing him, she was shaking so violently that she was scarcely able to stand.

"Sit down here, Marjorie; or lie down," Billy begged her, emotionally; and he cleared the silk cushions from the lounge.

She stared at him and suddenly started up straight.

"Mother! I've got to tell her now! Mother — she's not weak. She'll never forgive me, if I don't let her know in time to reach the hospital — soon."

"That's right, dear Marjorie! That's right!" Billy approved, sympathetically, patting her. "You ought to have your mother now!"

"I'd no idea father was hurt anything like this," Marjorie continued, staring up at Billy and then at Gregg, "when the call came as it did. Just to Doctor Grantham, I mean. You see, if father was hurt anything like this, I'd have thought anybody would have called home, too; right away."

"Probably it didn't seem so serious, at first," Gregg suggested.

"No; probably not. I didn't ask Mr. Russell. I didn't ask him at all." She turned about.

"Where is Mr. Russell?" Billy demanded.

Gregg moved nearer Marjorie; he could feel the flimsy defense, which he had tried to build about her, beginning already to fall to pieces. He had not thought of Billy knowing Grantham's assistant; now it was plain that Billy did.

"I don't know," Gregg said, as evenly as he could.

"Where's Mrs. Russell?" Billy demanded.

Yet he suspected nothing; Billy merely meant to take upon himself the direction of affairs here which, he felt, Gregg had been bungling.

"In her room, I suppose," Gregg said; for she had disappeared; and Gregg was thankful for that. "It was a frightful shock to her, of course, to have this happen here; she's done up. Probably her husband is with her — if he hasn't gone out for something."

For now Gregg considered that, though he had said that Russell had been in the flat, he had not said that

the man with Grantham was Russell; Grantham had made no introductions when Marjorie came in to look upon her father; and Marjorie was accepting everything she found without question. Billy was not yet suspicious; but his determination to take matters into his own hands was sure to uncover everything.

"Bill," Gregg said quickly, as Marjorie went back into the hall, "come here a minute!"

"Why? I want to talk to Russell or his wife."

Gregg did not argue; he jerked Billy back into the living room. There was a sun parlor with glass doors in front and Gregg opened one of these and pulled Billy into the little room with him. As he shut the glass door, he saw through it that Marjorie apparently had forgotten the question for Mr. Russell; apparently, she had not noticed that Billy and Gregg had left her; he could see her standing outside the door of the room where her father lay; she was looking in. No wonder she forgot everything else.

"Gregg," said Billy, "what in the devil ——"

"Bill," said Gregg, turning about. "There isn't any Mr. Russell to this flat! Do you get it now? Do you see?"

"What?"

There was no light in the sun parlor but that which came through the glass from the living room lamps and a little which streaked up from the street; even if Marjorie had turned about, she could not see Billy's face. And she did not turn. So Gregg was able to appeal:

"For God's sake, Bill, keep your voice down; and keep yourself together! Mr. Hale paid the rent on this place; there was no one here but Mrs. Russell. I mean, Bill, usually there wasn't. To-night Russell — he used to be her husband, but they got divorced —

came here and shot Mr. Hale! That's what's happened, Bill! Grantham knows it all, of course; and Carson — oh, for God's sake! Bill! Bill, if you care a damn for Marjorie, pull up! Oh, old fellow, I tried not to hand it to you like this! But you had to get it or she would! Don't you see? We've all got to pull together on this or ——" But Bill no longer was hearing.

"You're a liar!" he said, his big powerful hands clenched on Gregg's shoulders. "You admit to me now you're a liar."

"I got up that burglar story to keep it from Marjorie, Bill! Don't you see? I tried to pass Carson off as Russell; but I couldn't pass him off on you."

Yet Billy still held his grip and could not believe.

"Bill, get Grantham out of that room — and away from Marjorie," Gregg suggested then. "Ask him what happened."

That forced Billy to believe or go to Grantham; and, faced this way, Billy had to concede to himself his belief. He tore his hands away.

"Oh, Gregg; Gregg!"

"All right, Bill! It had to hit you that way! Wouldn't give a damn for you if it didn't!"

"It's not me, Gregg. It's Marjorie! Oh, Gregg, the poor little girl. Let me go to her! Let me by!"

"No, Bill; not now! Go outdoors; you walk around outside for a while."

"You let me out of here now!"

"It's for Marjorie, Bill; we have to stick together; keep it from her; get her out of here before she suspects. So don't you go to her now; don't try to say a word to her. Go outdoors only till the ambulance comes; then we'll all be out of here."

"I'm all right now."

"Not yet, Bill."

But Bill was able to take Gregg's hand from the door; and Gregg was unable to oppose him too violently for Marjorie returned to the living room.

"Billy!" she cried, looking about confusedly.

He opened the door and stepped to her, and Gregg gazed into the street and prayed for the ambulance. No moving car was in sight either way on the street, but he stood with his back to the lighted room where Billy now had Marjorie in his arms, kissing her and reassuring her.

When Gregg heard some one else come, he turned about and saw Mrs. Russell, and he stepped quickly into the living room. Evidently she had been bathing her eyes and otherwise composing herself and now had appeared to try to play the part before Marjorie Hale which Gregg had assigned to her. Why hadn't she stayed in her room? Gregg agonized when he saw her. Yet she appeared decent enough as she came forward calmly; too decent. That was the trouble. She made no move of her own to go to Marjorie but Marjorie, desperately needing another woman just then, started to go to her; and Gregg, realizing it, jerked forward. Probably — as he afterwards thought — he would have had to do something but he would not have done what Billy did. For Bill reached forward as though catching Marjorie back from the furnace of hell itself. "Don't touch her!" he blurted.

"What?" Marjorie cried, more frightened. "Why? What's she done?" Marjorie stared from Billy to Sybil Russell and back to Billy again. He then could give no explanation and it was just as well that he tried none, if it were any better for Marjorie to re-

main in ignorance for an extra minute or so. For Marjorie thought that what Billy meant was that Mrs. Russell had neglected some care or made some mistake which had diminished her father's chance of recovery. Idea of the truth could not seize Marjorie yet, though this now further excited and roused her.

The woman's writing desk stood at the wall on Marjorie's right; the top was closed and nothing was upon it. Marjorie rested her hand on it when Billy released her and she looked again at Mrs. Russell. Then Gregg, watching, saw Mrs. Russell's eyes following Marjorie's hand; almost instantly Mrs. Russell lifted her glance but Marjorie seemed to have realized Mrs. Russell's dread. Marjorie stared about and looked down and suddenly flung open the desk, gazed down and saw in a silver frame a picture of her father. She snatched it up; dropped it. A letter lay on one side; letters in handwriting she instantly recognized. She snatched up a letter; held it; crumpled it; dropped it and looked up.

Mrs. Russell was gone.

"Oh, Marjorie! Marjorie!" Billy cried and tried again to gather her in his arms. But she caught his big wrists in her little hands and with a strength that amazed him, she thrust him back from her; so he soon understood and made no more attempt.

"Gregg!" she faced about then, head up and calm. "Who shot father here? Why?"

"Russell," said Gregg. "He tried to blackmail, I think, Marjorie. He wasn't Mrs. Russell's husband. He only used to be." Gregg did not try to make it plainer; and there was no use trying to make it less cruel. Marjorie had it, whatever he said.

Once her hands clenched. "Where is he now? Not — not here?"

"No," said Gregg.

She did not follow thought of Russell for more than that flash. Her hands relaxed; slowly she swung her back to Gregg and Billy and stared at the hallway down which was the room where her father lay. Once she shrank shorter in a spasm; her tension had broken at her knees; but she caught up and regained herself, and not even Billy this time tried to grasp her.

She made not a move, not a quiver, not a gasp for pity; but Gregg, watching her, was sorrier for her than he had ever been for any one in all his life; and prouder for her. He could not know then how he loved her; love — it was hardly a thing to think about then. But he seemed to feel something, fluid before, take form hard and unyielding with him; and he knew that he and his life were that girl's. Then he looked up and saw Bill; but Bill did not see him.

Marjorie was turning about to them.

"Billy," she said, and then she looked by him to Gregg and though she did not say his name, yet it was to him she spoke, "I don't know what's coming over me. I'm all right now. Don't either of you worry. You see, I don't feel at all; I don't feel anything at all. Why, a minute ago I thought the worst thing in the world would be that my father would die. And now, I can't care!"

Billy breathed out, then caught his breath with a sob.

"Marjorie!"

"Don't, Billy," she begged. "I want to think; I have to think! The police for one thing; I was wondering a minute ago when they would come; I was

going to ask if any one had sent for them. Of course nobody did. We can't send for them now; we never can. Mother, and father himself; his mother — everybody, we've got to think of them! Why, wasn't it funny! I almost telephoned mother a minute ago, from here. I see that won't do now; but we have to send some word home, Gregg; what am I going to say?"

CHAPTER V

GREGG turned away and walked to the window in an effort to think quickly and clearly; but he did not succeed well. "I don't know yet; we haven't got to say it yet, Marjorie. When we have to, you'd better not depend on me," Gregg admitted, when he turned back. "I've bungled about everything to-night; but we won't muddle this along any further. Before we say anything now, we have to think of more than your mother and your own people; we have to figure out something that will stick with business men — with men like Mr. Stanway, especially, and with the newspapers, maybe, and with the police. I don't fool myself that I'm competent to get that up; Bill's not; you can't, Marjorie. Whoever does it has to be able to think of a thousand things that can't possibly come into our minds now. He has to have experience; he's got to be an expert. And there are experts in these things; with lots of experience. That's why more things like this never come out; that's why this won't come out. Bill, you're a lawyer; and it's a lawyer who fixes everything. Who's the best man in Chicago to fix this?"

"Best man?" Billy parroted, dazed.

"He means the worst man in Chicago, Billy," Marjorie explained, compassionately almost, as though it were Billy, not she, who was suffering. "He means who's the lowest lawyer you know, Billy; or the lowest

you've heard of? For you wouldn't know the sort of man we need, Billy; thank Heaven!"

"Lowest?" Billy parroted again.

"That's what we mean, isn't it, Gregg?" Marjorie appealed.

Gregg had no course but to accept. "He mustn't sell out his side, Bill. That fellow who got Leverell out of that mix-up that the papers dropped all of a sudden last fall, Bill; what was his name?

"Felix Rinderfeld?"

"That's the man!"

"Good God!" Billy whispered to himself. It seemed as if he had not been able quite to grasp what Marjorie and he were involved in until Gregg connected Rinderfeld with them.

"Do you know anybody better, Bill?"

That buzzer from the front door, which Billy and Marjorie had sounded so long, vibrated again but only for an instant and gently. Gregg stepped back into the sun parlor and saw on the street a long, white-topped motor-car.

"The ambulance is here," he announced quietly. "Go down, Bill, and let the men in; stretcher, of course, tell them."

Billy obeyed, relieved at something to do; Marjorie became whiter as her thought returned wholly to the physical condition of her father. She went into the bedroom and Grantham and Carson came out.

"Any change, doctor?" Gregg asked.

"No."

"Where's that car from, sir?"

"I called Fursten; he's a private firm."

"You're not taking Mr. Hale to St. Luke's, are you?"

"No."

"Where to, sir?"

"Mowbry, before Charles Hale lost consciousness, he told that woman to send for me; he left word for me to do everything possible to protect his family, whether I found him alive or dead. So I'm taking him to Fursten's sanitarium. It's much nearer than St. Luke's." Grantham named the street and number. "There's a good operating room there; and good care. He'll have as much chance for his life there as anywhere; and no questions asked, Mowbry, if I'm able to pull him through. If I don't, of course, the State's got to find out what happened. We're taking a chance but ——"

The doctor halted; Gregg nodded.

"I see, sir. You know, of course, that Marjorie found out."

"Yes."

"There's a lawyer named Rinderfeld who sees through things like this, doctor; fixes up the public explanation and all that, sir. I'm going to talk to him; he'll want to get in touch with you. You'll know now who he is."

"I think I've heard of him," Grantham acknowledged. He moved back into the bedroom as Billy appeared at the entrance door with the attendants from the ambulance; Grantham sent out Marjorie and after a minute, the men carried out her father. Grantham led the way downstairs and Marjorie and Billy followed. Gregg went as far as the top of the stairs, where he heard Grantham explaining to the tenants of the first apartment — whose door had again opened — that Mrs. Russell's brother had suffered a "stroke" and was being taken to a hospital. From the front sun

parlor, Gregg observed the stretcher put into the ambulance and he saw Marjorie and Grantham enter to ride in it; Billy and Carson got into Grantham's car. A few people had gathered to watch but they seemed to Gregg idly curious. If they asked any questions, they evidently were satisfied that the ambulance was removing a man suddenly taken sick. The white car drove off and the doctor's black one followed.

"That's cleared," Gregg murmured to himself with great relief; but he let himself relax for only a moment before he stepped to the closed door of Mrs. Russell's room and rapped.

"Where is the telephone?" he asked.

She let him in and showed him the instrument.

There was only one Rinderfeld listed in the directory; his name was Felix and he had both an office in the loop and a residence number on the south side. Gregg called up the latter and when Rinderfeld answered, Gregg ascertained that he was the attorney who had handled the Leverell matter so Gregg gave his name and said:

"I wish to retain you on a case which has just come up."

"All right; when do you come to see me?"

"I would like to have you come here," Gregg said; and gave the directions. He left the room and went back through the apartment, which was all quiet now. He locked the rear door where he had broken the glass and he removed the key; entering the disordered room where Mr. Hale had lain, he swiftly stripped the bed and bundled the linen in a corner. He went forward and ascertained that no one was loitering in front of the building.

After he had delayed for a few minutes in the living room, Mrs. Russell came in.

"Where have they taken — Mr. Hale?" she questioned quietly.

Gregg told her.

She gazed at him, consideringly, and then she asked:

"Why are you waiting here?"

"I've sent for a lawyer named Rinderfeld; he'll be here in about an hour. You must tell him everything that happened here; and I think you had better tell him anything else he wants to know."

"Why?"

"He handles situations like this," Gregg explained shortly. "He'll know the best thing for us all to do."

"Oh! Then we're to — act together."

"Of course."

Gregg dropped into a chair near the front window where he could overlook the street. She took her place on the piano bench on the opposite side of the room and Gregg put her out of his mind after a moment; he half-turned his back to her and, bending down, he gazed toward the gay, new, tall residence hotels and two-room apartment structures which were visible by lights from their windows, and were etched in dim outline against the glare rising from the streets before them. In Gregg's mind, previously, the life about here had represented to him, vaguely, a modern stage of personal relationships, rapidly replacing the more familiar sort in which he had grown up. He had never bothered his mind about so silly a speculation as to whether this stage "ought" to replace the other; his brain did not function in such useless ways. He observed as a simple, obvious fact that the easy, irresponsible-appearing way of living, which was represented

by this district, was becoming more and more popular; the old-fashioned "home" with sober duties and ideals was amazingly less so. If he thought at all of the transition stage, he had supposed it to be easy enough and natural, — merely a matter of choice for any individual as to how he preferred to live. For nothing had ever happened to Gregg to force him to feel anything else. But here, in this room where Marjorie's father had been shot and where a few minutes ago he had had to stand by and watch her learn "it," suddenly he revolted with savage aversion to these great indulgent buildings in such opposition to Marjorie's home and to his own, where he had been happy as a boy. He hated these places because they had hurt him and had hurt Marjorie so.

Yet he was aware that, in the great number of these rooms about, lived people who were married; right next door here was Nyman with his wife and their baby. The strange circumstance was that Gregg did not distinguish such neighbors as wholly different, in their relationship with each other, from Charles Hale and Sybil Russell. Gregg could not then figure out how or why; the simple fact was that he did not feel it.

It was partly this, perhaps, which held him from casting upon Sybil Russell that accusation of personal infamy which Billy had flung upon her. He thought that if she had never existed, in her place on that piano bench near the spot where Charles Hale had been shot, would be sitting some other young woman who represented to Marjorie's father the passion and the escape from duty and responsibilities which had drawn Charles Hale to this place. For to have his share in the life about here — the young, new, reckless independence

of this district — rather than particularly for her, Charles Hale had come here.

Gregg sat back and straightened and, restlessly, he arose and strode down the hall, thinking. Not about Marjorie's father and Mrs. Russell; but about himself and Marjorie. For Gregg was no hypocrite and what he thought with himself was that if he married Marjorie, as to-night he had longed to in a way he had never desired anything else before, he would take her to some such neighborhood as this; some such life as that which went on about here would become hers and his. For he wanted her to live with him as his wife but he did not want to enter upon new duties and responsibilities with her; he meant to escape such things as far as possible to his wife and to himself.

"Good thing Bill's got you," Gregg muttered to himself. "Good thing you have old Bill. Oh, damn, damn."

He returned to the living room where Mrs. Russell, left alone, had become more frightened and was standing and staring absently about.

"They must have reached the hospital by this time!" she cried to Gregg.

"Yes; probably."

She started past him and he caught her wrist. "Don't telephone there; don't send any call from here to anywhere!"

For an instant she flared up, defying him: "You shall not tell me what I may do! I am going to know what is happening to him! He's mine! I — I love him, you — boy! Do you think that I ——"

"I don't think at all," Gregg stopped her calmly and firmly, "about you and him. That's not my affair.

But other people are thinking. We will hear if anything more happens. You'd better sit down there again, hadn't you?"

She had good sense, Gregg noticed; indeed, it was extraordinary how well she controlled herself, how little of the irresponsible she had indulged in. Now that he took time to observe her, he found her distinctly a person of marked individualities. His first impression of her as a woman lacking in the weakness and pliability which might be presumed of one in her situation had progressed to perception of more definite qualities of will and self-reliance than he often saw in women. Not for money, Gregg was sure, had she chosen to do what she had done. She had said she loved Hale; but, as Gregg went on talking with her, as impersonally as possible about what the doctors had discovered and about Mr. Hale's chances for recovery, she offered none of the usual, stale, socialistic "free love" excuses or arguments for her way of living.

Gregg was rather relieved at that; they always made him disgusted; at least the sort of people who put them forth always were to him a loathsome lot. This woman, whatever she was, had nothing to do with that lot. Her way of living asked for no approval of others; it was her own for reasons sufficient to herself and she did not trouble to defend or explain it further than to mention that she was down town, regularly, on business days; for she was a life-insurance agent. Then, forming a sudden decision, she made her sole direct reference to her life at the flat:

"Charles Hale and I split expenses here and everywhere; he paid his; I paid mine. Fifty-fifty. That's the one fact I care to have you, and members of his family, know. We went fifty-fifty from the first. I

made seven thousand dollars of my own last year. Do you believe me? "

"Of course I do," said Gregg.

A few minutes after that — it was almost midnight — Felix Rinderfeld appeared.

His arrival was by means of a new "town car" which either was a Rolls-Royce or so perfect a copy that the difference was not distinguishable from the third floor sun parlor. Rinderfeld proved to be a young man, evidently not five years older than Gregg. As his name suggested, he was a Jew and he was of the type that keeps himself, while young, in vigorous physical condition; a man of medium height and ordinary proportions, he had cultivated an emphatic self-confidence of bearing sufficient to make most people describe him as having "presence." Gregg recognized him at once as a man who, without doing anything actually unmannerly, yet made it a custom to be conspicuous about such places as the Blackstone and the Drake; once, Gregg remembered, he had almost asked a waiter who the fellow was.

He was not embarrassed in the slightest about his business nor did he expect his clients to be about theirs. In fact, he entered as though he had dropped in upon personal friends for a casual midnight chat and was in no hurry to get to business. Gregg was. He informed Rinderfeld carefully of Charles Hale's position in respect to his family and also went into what details he could concerning Hale's situation in Tri-Lake, his recent rapid promotions and the opposition of Stanway; he related the facts which Marjorie knew and how Doctor Grantham had taken Hale with Marjorie and Whittaker to Fursten's. Rinderfeld seemed to approve heartily of Fursten's. Gregg submitted him-

self to the several questions which Rinderfeld put; then he left the room while Rinderfeld talked with Mrs. Russell.

It was nearly an hour before the final cessation of murmurs told Gregg that Rinderfeld had obtained from Mrs. Russell the information he needed and he stepped into the dining room where Gregg was waiting.

"All set now," announced Rinderfeld, reassuringly. "Of course, two elements in this are temporarily out of control. First, what George Russell may do. If the fool gets overcome with fright and gives himself up to the police, we'll have a somewhat difficult situation. But she doesn't think he'll do that. However, I'm going to have him found. Second, is Hale going to die? I'll take that in hand myself now. I'm going to Fursten's."

"What's the best thing for me to do now?" Gregg asked.

"Go home," Rinderfeld supplied promptly; and he made a note of Gregg's address and telephone number. "After I've had a look about Fursten's, I'll send word if I've need for you."

He thrust forward his hand and, with more reluctance than Gregg could recall feeling at such a formality, Gregg shook hands. Together they said good night to Mrs. Russell, who plainly had her instructions.

In his car, Gregg followed the shining coupé of Rinderfeld into Sheridan Road and down the boulevard to the street for Fursten's. When the lawyer made the turn, it was not recollection of his instruction which kept Gregg from turning after him; what held Gregg straight on the way to Pearson Street was thought of Marjorie and Billy together at the hospital; Bill had

the right to be with her now; upon them Gregg had no reason to intrude.

He put up his car and ascended to his apartment, which was deserted at this hour; for Dora, the maid, was the daughter of the woman who cooked in the apartment below and she shared her mother's room on the lower floor. Gregg went into Billy's room to make sure that Bill had not returned; then, restlessly, he strolled through the empty rooms. He opened a bottle of whiskey and took a drink; he put a band record on the phonograph and played it over and over, while he sat stretched out in a Morris chair before it. A little after two o'clock, he turned out the lights and shut himself in his own room, where he lay on his bed without undressing. He could not drive off memory of what he had witnessed this night; and now he was not trying to. For his mind had ceased to give him again and again only the vision of that apartment on Clearedge Street; of Charles Hale lying like dead with the doctors bending over him; of Marjorie taking up her father's picture and dropping it and looking from Billy to him and learning. His visions were beginning to go back a little to Mr. Hale greeting his guests at the wide door of his home; to the dinner table with Mr. Hale at one end, all friendly and easy; and his wife at the other as she had been. And her voice seemed to come to Gregg again as, deliberately and merely as a matter of fact, she related incidents of her last long stay abroad and as she went on to her plans for returning to Brittany for several months "with my daughter this time, I hope. It is too bad Mr. Hale's business never permits him to do more than take me across the ocean."

Gregg clenched his fists in a queer instinctive spasm. He sat up. A few minutes later, he heard Bill's key

in the front door. Evidently Bill hung up his coat and stood in the hall while he talked to himself:

"You wouldn't say it could happen! You wouldn't ——"

Billy trod heavily to his room where he moved about, talking to himself. Gregg got up and opened the door from the bathroom into Billy's.

"How's Mr. Hale, Bill?"

Billy had been undressing while he walked about; he had his coat and waistcoat off and his collar in his hand when he turned. If Gregg had not known that Billy never drank, he must have supposed him drunk from the redness of his face and of his bloodshot eyes.

"Oh! You here, Gregg?" He did not add verbally, but he might as well have said, that he had forgotten all about Gregg. "We took Mr. Hale to a hospital, Gregg. A private one; Fursten's."

"Yes," said Gregg. "I know. I saw you start; what happened when you got there?"

"Oh, Doctor Grantham operated. It was successful, they think. They got the bullet. Probably Mr. Hale will live."

"That's good," said Gregg.

"Good?" Billy repeated. "I suppose so. Poor Marjorie! And Mrs. Hale, Gregg!"

"Oh, what about her, Bill? What have you told her? You took Marjorie home, of course."

Billy stared absently at Gregg and then nodded. "She was in her room, Mrs. Hale was; gone to bed but awake. She hadn't expected Marjorie earlier. We passed the club on the way; people were still dancing."

"Then Marjorie didn't see her mother?"

"Just called good night to her and she went to her room, Marjorie did. I waited downstairs; I heard her."

"I see. Then you decided to tell her nothing to-night. Rinderfeld wanted that?"

"Yes, if we didn't have to say anything."

"Then how about to-morrow?"

Billy started to reply and then went to his coat, from a pocket of which he extracted a sheet of paper covered with distinct, black handwriting.

"He wrote this out for you and me."

Gregg took it and read, in the legible flourishes which at each line recalled Felix Rinderfeld, these concise, practical instructions:

"For Willam Whittaker and Gregg Mowbry.

"Up to the occasion of the telephone call which reached Marjorie Hale and originated in Doctor Grantham's office, there is no need to correct your recollections.

"The occasion of the call was this: for many weeks Mr. Charles Hale had been aware of a soreness in his left side. Having consulted Doctor Grantham, he learned that there existed a pathological condition which might of itself subside but which might, on the other hand, suddenly become acute and endanger his life. He concealed this knowledge not only from his family but from his friends and business associates.

"His errand in the city last night, before the time he intended to take the train, was to consult Dr. Grantham, who examined him, discovered to his alarm that the condition had suddenly become acute and that an immediate and radical operation was necessary. Mr. Hale objected to this, wishing to avoid prolonged absence from his office at this difficult time; but upon Doctor Grantham pointing out that his life was in danger, he agreed to undergo an operation, provided the nature of it be kept secret. He believed that if it became known that a radical operation was performed,

the directors of the Tri-Lake Corporation might be led to think that his health was permanently impaired; this presumption would be unjustifiable but, considering the internal situation of the corporation, Mr. Hale believed that it would seriously affect his prospects for promotion to Mr. Dorsett's position. Therefore, Mr. Hale arranged that Doctor Grantham operate in a small, private hospital and, during the period of his convalescence, he would give out that he was ill at home from an ordinary case of influenza.

"Doctor Grantham therefore took him to Fursten's, instructing his girl to communicate with Mrs. Hale; she telephoned to the Hale home, was informed that Mrs. Hale was at the club where Mrs. Lovell was giving a dance; and Doctor Grantham's girl called there, not finding Mrs. Hale, but Miss Hale, who, with the advice of William Whittaker and Gregg Mowbry, decided to spare Mrs. Hale anxiety and not inform her until the operation was performed.

" Miss Hale and William Whittaker and Mowbry immediately left for Fursten's and Miss Hale and Whittaker were actually present while the operation was performed; this was successful and Whittaker took Miss Hale to her home.

" The above constitute the essential facts. Comment: it is not expected that the belief that Mr. Hale is ill at home with influenza can be successfully maintained. However, this will be originally stated with the expectation that, sooner or later, others will discover he has been in a city hospital for a surgical operation. The 'truth' as above outlined will then be reluctantly admitted; that will be found to satisfy every one and nothing more damaging will be suspected."

Gregg looked up, as Billy came beside him impatiently and broke out again, " Good God, how could a

man do a thing like that? How could he — could he?"

Gregg could endure no more emotion. "Like this?" he said, brandishing Rinderfeld's paper. "This is Rinderfeld's business, Bill. He does it all the time; and he's done us a good job, I'd say. That double lie alone is worth his price — whatever he charges for it. Giving the neighbors something to find out that will satisfy them when they've got it; now you and I, Bill, never would have figured out that. It's got to come from experience."

Billy stared, not hearing. "I mean Mr. Hale, Gregg! How could he do a thing like that?"

"Oh," Gregg said, as though recollecting. "Mr. Hale was up against something, Bill. He had about three things he could do; one and two others. I suppose maybe he tried the first for a while and then got tired sticking it or — something made him mad, maybe. That left him the choice of the other two; and I suppose he chose the one which he figured showed more consideration to his wife."

Billy gaped. "What did you say?"

Gregg repeated it; but Billy continued to stare as though Gregg had gone mad. "Why, Gregg ——"

"That's all right and I'm all right too," Gregg assured. "I'm going to get some sleep now. You'd better make a stab at it, too. G'night, Bill. I forgot one thing. I'm glad, Bill."

"Glad? You are crazy, then?"

"About Marjorie and you, old fellow."

"Oh!"

"'Night, Bill." Then Gregg withdrew and, returning to his own room, for the first time he locked his door against Bill; for he knew that pretty soon Bill was coming to demand an explanation; and he didn't

care to talk or have to think any more before he had a sleep. For he held no illusions that he was not in for an adventure which, sooner or later, was bound to try him out with himself and force him to find out what he was and, also, what he might be. Gregg's philosophy had never contemplated any such stirring up.

He reread the clear, succinct narrative of events which Rinderfeld had supplied Billy, a simple enough and a straightforward seeming story and one which, so far as Gregg could now discern, covered all probable contingencies. It was a good piece of work for Rinderfeld and, for its very simplicity, far better than Gregg or Billy or any other amateur in such affairs could have composed. But it could not be proof against every attack; indeed, at any moment a circumstance might become public which would scrap the whole careful scheme and thrust the truth into the open.

Well, suppose it did? Gregg, in his exhaustion of feeling, scarcely cared; for him, the calamity which he feared and which he had set himself to prevent, had happened. Marjorie knew; and the addition of public dishonor could hardly score her more. He thought of her as he had last seen her, — stupified, still, mercifully unable yet actually to feel the full effect of the blow which had struck her. But soon she must commence to feel; and when she would, Gregg longed to be with her. But he knew that he could not be; that would be Billy's right.

Gregg lay down and tried to summon sleep. He could not let himself think of her turning to Bill for help in these next days before her. What sort of help could Bill give; how could he aid her to understand? No use bothering about that; Bill would be the one with her, through these next days, and the result of

them upon her probably would determine whether she was to become hard, disillusioned and reckless and do the wild, unforeseeable things which Marjorie Hale might do, or whether she would emerge from it all the Marjorie that Gregg dreamed she might be. Well, no use thinking about that; none of his business, anyway; she was Bill's and with Bill she must become what Bill and she would determine.

CHAPTER VI

MARJORIE began dressing about half-past nine in the morning. She had been out of bed and in many times during the hours since she undressed about three o'clock; at most of these times she had stirred purely from nervousness, but after dawn she had assigned to herself errands such as gaining possession of the newspaper, as soon as Sarah had brought it in from the porch, and listening when Martin, the houseman, answered a telephone ring.

The newspaper printed not a word about Charles Hale, not a mention of the shooting on Clearedge Street or anything about any one named Russell; and the telephone brought no alarm. The big, warm, pleasant house was as quiet and secure-seeming as upon any other morning after her father had gone away and she and her mother were sleeping late.

It was a quiet morning outside and the bright, yellow sunlight, striking through the bare trees to the snow-covered roof of the porch and shining upon the lawn, bore enough heat to dissolve the whiteness into wet, glistening patches; the sun brought the white and purple pigeons fluttering from a neighboring barn and set them to preening on the damp, steamy walk; and a flock of brown sparrows came, cheerily squabbling and chattering. When Marjorie again opened her door at the ringing of the telephone, she heard the snapping of a wood fire below; in the dining room, of course. Her mother always liked a fire at breakfast in the winter.

Everything was going on so exactly as usual, — and nothing was the same; nothing could ever be the same again.

Yesterday's world had been a friendly place, free from fears and filled with pleasant neighbors preferring you happy and wishing you well; to-day, what a strange, hostile, threatening air hung over everything. Marjorie Hale, who had never known what it was to fear people, found herself afraid. If her friends knew what she knew, how they would tear her down and destroy her; they all might not want to; some of them might, conscientiously, attempt to help her; but no one, if he or if she found out, could really save her; in spite of themselves, they must join against the Hales and destroy her family.

This struck her, for long periods, utterly prostrate and nerveless with despair and ignominy and then, contrarily, it spurred her to a nervous excitation in which she felt the presence of more power and will than she had ever before possessed and in which she determined to fight that annihilating peril alone. For she was so alone that, though every one in every house about had become a pitiless menace to her, the greatest danger of all lay in her home; it was in her mother. If her mother suspected, then everything which yet was left would instantly be gone. And Marjorie could not bear the thought of more destruction. So she lay on her bed, shivering with dread, when she heard her mother moving about. Soon she heard her proceed downstairs and knowing that her mother would inquire for her, but would not send to disturb her, Marjorie remained in the refuge of her room and refrained from betraying that she was awake. The program for this day, which she had accepted from

Rinderfeld, spared her as much as possible from the ordeal of explanations; according to the arrangement, Doctor Grantham was to call at half-past ten and detail to her mother the prepared story of last night; and, promptly, the doctor's car appeared and he entered the house.

Marjorie crept to her door, opened it and listened quiveringly to the voices below; perhaps "something" — that euphony for death — had happened since early in the morning. No; the doctor had come only to repeat the narrative of his friend's long-concealed ailment, the sudden discovery last evening that an immediate operation was necessary and the rest as Rinderfeld had composed it. Marjorie closed her door and went again to her window where she stood staring blankly out until she heard her mother on the stairs; she opened Marjorie's door and entered, pale and with her large blue eyes looking darker than naturally, as they did when she was anxious; but otherwise she was controlled and Marjorie was swept with miserable pride in her. For she knew that her mother had heard Doctor Grantham's hard story and without suspicion had accepted it.

"My poor child," she said with compassion and with her cold hands she clasped Marjorie's equally cold ones. "You had that to bear all alone last night. But you knew where I was, Marjorie; you knew I was with Mrs. Cleve."

"Yes, mother," Marjorie admitted and she could not help breaking down a little. She was not afraid of her mother now; she was overswept with the degradation of what her father had done, of his falseness and deception; and yet she also was deceiving her mother.

"I realize you acted only to spare me, child; that is

your father in you," her mother said, with her arms about her and kissing her once. "I know he considered that he was sparing me by keeping that serious trouble hidden so long and then going off by himself to look death in the face. He always wishes to spare me, doesn't he, dear?"

"Yes, mother," Marjorie said again, wretchedly.

"He is quite, quite safe, Marjorie — Doctor Grantham assures me. Doctor will take me down to see him now. Of course, I understand your father's motives for wishing to keep his operation secret even from his friends. I realize I must not let my own feelings stand in the way of his business future. Kiss me, Marjorie. — There now, I'll go with Doctor Grantham; you mustn't think of going, child. You've been through too much already."

Marjorie was glad not to argue against her; Marjorie scarcely trusted herself to be with her mother yet. Her mother went to her own room and Doctor Grantham came up.

"How are we this morning?" he asked, in his cheery, impersonal voice. He was at the age of slow, imperceptible physical change and except for his bearing, which was naturally more assured, and his clothes, which were better, he seemed to Marjorie exactly the same as she first remembered him, coming in and asking her that same question, in that same voice, every morning of those weeks when she was in bed with scarlet fever when she was ten years old. That was when the Hales inhabited the seven-room clapboard house on the fifty-foot lot in Irving Park, and Marjorie's father took care of the furnace, and Doctor Grantham had his office above the drug store on the Montrose Avenue corner. Of course, long ago, he too had moved away

and he no longer "took" general practice cases of scarlet fever and measles. While he had been becoming a great surgeon, had he, like his friend, her father, also become some one strange inside, Marjorie wondered? The question caused her to stand stiffly as he came up to her and while he lifted her hand and slipped his deft, firm fingers to her pulse.

"You mustn't keep yourself going so, Marjorie," he reproved her, kindly, releasing her wrist. "I suppose you haven't slept at all."

"No."

"You must sleep this morning. Your father is doing splendidly; there will be no trouble with your mother. You've been a champion, Marjorie. Now really try to go to sleep; if you don't succeed, drop one of these in a glass of water; drink it." He took a couple of capsules from his vest pocket and laid them on her table; then he turned away, but he did not leave the room.

"Doctor!" Marjorie suddenly appealed.

He swung about to her, as though he had been waiting for what would follow.

"Why did he do it, Doctor Grantham? Father! Why, oh, why did he?"

Grantham shook his head; he intended undoubtedly to convey to her that he could not make it out but he failed in this; he succeeded in showing her only that he would not discuss that with her.

"You can take both those capsules an hour apart, if you need two, Marjorie," he said kindly. "Don't try to figure out life in one day, girl; no brain can stand it. Take one of those and lie down and count sheep — don't think — relax; then, if you need, take the other." He went away.

"Relax! Count sheep!" Marjorie repeated to herself with disdain, standing at the window and watching her mother precede Doctor Grantham to his car; yet, when they disappeared, reaction, if not relaxation, set in; she undressed and went to bed so utterly gone that she slept as if she were drugged, though both of Doctor Grantham's capsules remained unopened on her table. It was after five when she awoke and outside the sunlight was gone; her mother was sitting quietly beside her and, as soon as her head cleared and recollection came, Marjorie discerned that her mother was still unsuspecting; nothing had occurred at the hospital or during her absence from the house to turn her mother's pure, idealistic thought into channels of doubt.

"I returned shortly after noon, dear," she said, smoothing Marjorie's forehead with her cool, steady hand. "Your father was comfortable and I have since telephoned and they tell me he is sleeping. So we have no cause to question his rapid recovery, dear —— And Doctor Grantham assures me positively there can be no recurrence of the trouble."

Marjorie had supper brought to her room but afterwards she dressed and, going downstairs, she discovered Billy, who took her in his arms. "I told Sarah not to send my name up but if you came down, I meant to be with you," he said emotionally and kissed her.

"Don't — just now, Billy," she begged, but when he released her in compliance, she held to him for a moment, "I need you so much but I can't want to feel yet, don't you see?" she tried to explain.

He assured her that he did, but she realized, when she kept away from him, that she was hurting his feelings; how big and warm he was, and what a power of

feelings he had packed in him! And she did not guess how much until he drew her into the seclusion of the little den beyond the drawing-room where he shut the door tight and then put his big, strong, blundering arms around her again.

"Dear Marjorie, will you marry me to-morrow?"

It was so far from any feeling she could imagine sharing that night that she cried out, "What?"

He repeated it, pressing her to him and explaining, "I won't expect you to begin being my wife to-morrow, Marjorie. But I want to feel you're mine, whatever happens."

That frightened her more. "Why? Is father worse?"

Instantly he tried to reassure her. "Oh, no, dear. It's only the danger of scandal; if it comes, I want you to have my name."

She did not relax at that, as he seemed to expect; it made her tenser. stronger, and she worked with her fingers to loosen his hold upon her. "Thank you, Billy, but a name wouldn't change — disgrace." The idea of another name shielding her seemed so trivial that she could not think about it, but she realized that his offer meant much to him; and now he elaborated it.

"If you come to feel need of my name or if I've anything else in the world that can help you, Marjorie, it's yours. Do you know, dear, how you're fixed for — money?"

"No; I haven't thought of it."

"If your father's sick a long time, or if, for any reason, he doesn't return to his office, you must know that all I have is yours. I've fifty thousand dollars of stock in father's bank in my own name, which I can get

whenever I ask for it. Every cent of it is yours — ours, Marjorie — to see you through whatever's before us."

But she could not think of what he was saying; she could not continuously think even of him, though it was good to have him, good to know she could depend upon his big, honest, whole-souled love, good to feel the complete cleanliness of him in her world so suddenly soiled. Through his clasp by which he was attempting to comfort her, she became sensitive to some new danger which he was striving to deny and prevent affecting himself and her; and soon she wrung admission of it from him. Reinderfeld wished her to call at his office as early in the morning as possible.

"But there can be no need of your going yourself. I will go for you," Billy declared. "I'll make him tell me anything he has to say to you."

Through this, she perceived a controversy already passed between Billy and Rinderfeld, and she asked, "You saw him to-day?"

"Yes; he telephoned me to tell you to come and see him; he wouldn't tell me why over the 'phone; so I went to his office. And he wouldn't tell me any more."

"Why not, do you suppose?"

"Because I don't honestly believe he's anything more to tell; he said he wanted to have a talk with you; it was essential for him 'to have a private talk' with you, were his exact words."

"Where is his office, Billy?"

"You aren't thinking of going there!"

"As early as I can to-morrow."

"I told you I'd go for you."

"You've been for me, Billy."

There was nothing for him but to give in at last; he demanded the right to accompany her; but this, too, she refused and so they quarreled; and both begged for forgiveness and they compromised on the basis that Billy might meet her downtown and take her to Rinderfeld's door and wait for her afterwards.

CHAPTER VII

THE office door of Felix Rinderfeld, attorney-at-law, gleams in gold letters with his name and estate alone. It faces a long white hall which is on an upper floor of one of the modern office buildings on Clark Street and, upon opening the door and glancing ahead through the wide, specklessly clean window opposite, the visitor looks upon the gray, columned façade of the Cook County Courts block.

It is not the most delectable highway of downtown Chicago, — Clark Street. Michigan Avenue, with the lake front park to its east, is at once the Fifth Avenue, the Mall, the Avenue de l'Opera of Chicago, the boulevard of hotels and clubs, of jewelers and costumers, of hatters and bootmakers, of tea rooms and confectioners, of the Art Institute and Orchestra Hall. Marjorie Hale knew Michigan Avenue well from the Blackstone north. On Wabash Avenue, which lies next to the west, she knew, of course, McClurg's bookstore, Lyon and Healy's, Colby's and several other stores. On State Street she was familiar at least with the squares from Carson Pirie's to Marshall Field's; and even on Dearborn, which is mostly a man's street of commerce and contracts, she could identify a building or two; but she was almost a complete stranger to Clark Street in daytime when the theaters which occasionally drew her there at night were closed.

She passed along squares where remain many of the stiff, old and dingy structures erected in the seventies

during the first hasty rebuilding following the great fire; and what chiefly caught her eye this morning, as Billy escorted her, were lurid film posters, pawnshops and cutlery displays; the huge, sooty colossus of the city hall and county buildings did not, in her mind, elevate the street. She had a feeling of being lowered as she sought Rinderfeld's number; she had never thought of herself as client of those who had business to do about the divorce courts.

But there was nothing second-rate or deteriorating to self-respect in the air of Rinderfeld's office; quite the contrary; it was a Rolls-Royce — or at least an excellent pseudo-Rolls-Royce — sort of office, even in the waiting room where Marjorie now found herself. If he had ever luxuriated in the maroon ostentation of heavy mahogany for office furnishings, he had learned better and stepped higher to the repression of dull walnut of delicate Chippendale-like lines in chairs and in side table upon which reposed no ordinary five and ten-cent weeklies, but *Country Life, Field* (the English edition), the *Spectator* and the two volumes of Wells' "Outline of History." The girl who sat at a small, Chippendale walnut desk near a door so obviously private that it needed no label was no usual office attendant; she was pretty, but repressed, pale without a patch of rouge; she was almost nunlike in her black dress, high about the neck and, as Marjorie noticed when she arose, lower than usual in the skirt.

"You are?" she asked quietly and without any apparent personal curiosity.

"Miss Conway," Marjorie replied, using the name that Rinderfeld had assigned her for her communications with him.

"About ten minutes, I think," the girl said and re-

sumed her seat. No distinguishable word came through the solid door, but there was the hum of a heavy voice. No one else was in the waiting room, but in a few minutes a gray-haired, well-dressed, self-important man of about fifty-five entered brusquely, nodded to the attendant, who nodded to him, and sat down rather suddenly in a chair opposite Marjorie, after picking up the copy of *Field* which he did not read but held as a sort of screen over which to peer. While Marjorie was still wondering in what relation to scandal he was waiting upon Rinderfeld, a buzzer under the Chippendale desk sounded in the most demure of audible tones and the black-gowned young lady arose and half-opened the door beside her; after Marjorie passed in, the door closed silently but with firmness.

With equal firmness was closed a farther door by which the gentleman of the deep, humming voice evidently had made his exit; for Rinderfeld was alone. He was on his feet on the other side of a flat, delicately legged table desk which was at the middle of the large, soft, blue Chinese rug which carpeted the room. In the waiting room the walls were grasscloth hung with a couple of good etchings; here on three walls were panels of the same hue of walnut as the desk and filing case and chairs; paneling too was between the two windows on the west which, like that in the waiting room, gave a view of the county courts. Possibly Rinderfeld did not quite appreciate the effect of overdoing elegant repression; obviously some one must pay for all this; and for the first time Marjorie affrightedly speculated on the cost of Mr. Rinderfeld's retainment. For her glance at him upon entering had relieved her of her overnight terror that inevitable public

scandal threatened her. Rinderfeld was reassurance and self-confidence itself.

"Come, sit right here," he invited for greeting, bowing and turning the Chippendale chair at the left end of his table so that it faced his own more directly.

"Good morning, Mr. Rinderfeld," she replied nervously, and sat down as bidden.

"It is very good of you to call here," he said, still standing before her and estimating her. "We might talk elsewhere, but here we are certain never to be disturbed."

It had been impossible for Marjorie to deliberate on the night when he followed her to Fursten's, whether this man was personally contemptible or not; she had been altogether too dazed to think of him as a man possessing personal qualities other than the knowledge of how her father, her mother and she might be saved from the morass of infamy threatening to rise about them. She knew, of course, that Billy despised Rinderfeld and that Billy was awaiting her outside rather with an idea of disinfecting her, when she emerged from this office, from the contamination of this man; but there was nothing about the lawyer's manner which seemed contaminating. He was affected, but with nothing worse than over-courtliness in his manner; certainly it was far better to err on that side than by over-familiarity with a girl placed in her relationship to him. A really coarse man might be expected to express himself by putting his hand upon her; but Rinderfeld had so wholly refrained from such contact that he had avoided even offering his hand when she entered.

She appreciated this in him; she appreciated, too, the perfect cleanliness and healthfulness of his appearance. He was a bit overdressed; in what respect, she

could not see, for it was in no one respect; his blue serge suit was perhaps too perfectly tailored; his shirt too silky; his tie too perfectly arranged; his lack was no more than a saving touch of the casual; he seemed to realize that lack and to attempt to remedy it, as he sat down.

"I hope I have not worried you by asking the privilege of this talk."

"You mean nothing more has happened yesterday, Mr. Rinderfeld?"

"Nothing in the sense that happenings are strokes of fate completely beyond human control: but of course the regular sequence of events proceeds."

He said that calmly, but it shortened her breath again after the temporary relief of first seeing him. "What is the regular sequence of events, please?"

Rinderfeld leaned slightly toward her, resting his left arm on his desk; a dictation phonograph was too near him and he pushed it slightly farther off. "The people, who knew, are talking more, of course."

"What people who knew — of what, Mr. Rinderfeld?"

"Of the situation at the apartment on Clearedge Street prior to the — accident of the other night."

"Oh; who knew of that?"

Rinderfeld smiled slightly; not an unpleasant smile and not suggesting amusement at her innocence or superiority over her. He was smiling to reassure her before she heard his next words.

"The other night, when I talked with you, I did not know how many might happen to be informed; possibly they might be very few, so I did not discuss the matter with you. Since then I have found that the usual number of neighbors and others seem to have

fairly accurate information of events up to the shooting; they do not seem to know of that; they know something happened night before last, but they have not yet learned what."

He smiled again in reassurance, but Marjorie gasped and went weak. Rinderfeld straightened and waved his hand before him as though brushing away a fly.

"Think of them as flies, my dear young lady," he said. "Flies cause troubles, do they not? Do they not?" he repeated and, as he evidently meant to force an answer, Marjorie nodded.

"Exactly," Rinderfeld agreed. "Now, where are they to be found in their season? Everywhere outdoors; is that not so?"

When again he waited, again Marjorie nodded.

"Now what do we do about them? Do we go out to exterminate them? No; we screen against them, knowing if we keep them out of our houses we are safe. Only if they come in are they capable of causing us trouble. That is the way with these fly humans who know what we might wish they do not; keep them out and, no matter what they know or say, they cannot harm you. It is as simple as that."

"Of course you understand," said Marjorie, "that is not quite clear to me."

Rinderfeld nodded. "I am going to ask you, for a few moments to think accurately or, at least, to follow me while I assign to the different items of conduct and reputation the exact values which they possess — in distinction from the values which we like to pretend we hold them at. You read the papers, of course."

"Yes."

"You cannot have failed then to have become familiar with the fate of a certain prominent gentleman in New

York City who, by the publication of scandal against him, found it advisable to resign a position which was one of the most important in the world. Now what, in your opinion, forced him out?"

"Why," said Marjorie. "What he did. When his associates learned that, they could not keep a man of his character in his position."

Rinderfeld nodded, not in agreement; he was telling her merely that she had said exactly what he expected her to say.

"His character had nothing to do with it. How many of his associates, do you suppose, were surprised and shocked by the morning papers? My dear young lady, let us think. What a veritable cloud of witnesses his wife produced against him, and the newspapers interviewed — servants, sailors, clerks, jewelers and what not. The number of people in every layer of society who suspected his character was extraordinary; you would have said, if you had known it, half would have been more than sufficient to ruin him but, until his wife brought charges against him in court, they were all harmless. They could whisper; undoubtedly they did; they could wag their heads; but they could not strike him.

"He could have snapped his fingers at them all — in fact, for several years he seemed to have been snapping his fingers at them — and he could have continued to do exactly as he pleased had he kept guard over the gate to court action against him, which was through accusation by his wife.

"That immediately turned his most private affairs into the most public of property. Perhaps you have been amazed, in reading in the papers of the scandal of other men's lives, how the newspapers so quickly

gathered the facts which they publish. My dear young lady, in most cases they have been known even to the newspaper men for months or years; but the newspapers were helpless to handle them until court action started by somebody makes proper and publishable known facts which, before some one complained in court, would have been libel. Of course the publication in no way alters the man's character — merely his reputation; and it does not alter even his reputation with the people nearest him, who had known about it before. But now they discover they must cast him out, because every one else knows too. It is not, you see, the unforgivable sin which destroys him but the no-longer-concealable scandal. If it were the former, there would not be many — pardon me; you will say I am cynical instead of merely experienced. But now we may, perhaps, proceed to a more businesslike estimate of our immediate needs than might have been possible a few minutes ago."

He arose, and crossing to a table upon which stood a silver carafe with a couple of goblets, he poured two glasses of water and returned with them on a small silver tray.

Marjorie gazed at them as though not recognizing what they were for; they were beautiful, extravagant goblets with silver applied on the glass; but the expensiveness did not impress her now and did not remind her of the probable extortion of Rinderfeld's fees. In her sickening fright, she could feel only dependence upon this man, so assured and expert in her troubles. He spoke to her twice, urging her to drink, before she was able to refuse, whereupon he drained one glass and, resuming his seat, placed the other goblet on the desk near him.

"You may now see that it is relatively unimportant that twelve or fourteen neighbors of Mrs. Russell may be aware that all has not been regular with her and that they may have identified the man. For all practical purposes they are harmless; some of them undoubtedly feel sympathy for them both; some feel it is none of any one's else affair; a few, unquestionably, are shocked. But very few people, without some motive of self-advantage, take the trouble of disciplining others. They merely take it out in talk. There is one chance — perhaps as large a chance as one in a thousand — that some busybody from Clearedge Street may visit your home. I may say the chance exists only if there happens to be a neighbor who lives by the profession of morality. I mention this solely that when it may occur to you, you will disregard it.

"To discover who may be dangerous, we have merely to reckon who may consider himself benefited by ruining your father; as well as I have been able to calculate so far, there are only two. One is Russell. He tried blackmail which he rather injudiciously backed by a flourish with a revolver which he fired, I believe, in excitement and not intentionally. Undoubtedly now he is frightened; when your father recovers and returns to business, he may again be heard from — but not now unless in connection with the man whom we have immediately to guard against, Stanway. Unquestionably you know Mr. E. H. Stanway."

Marjorie nodded; her lips were very dry and she longed now for the water at Rinderfeld's elbow, but she would not ask for it.

"I've known him all my life," she said. "He employed father, who started as his clerk, Mr. Rinderfeld."

"Exactly, and who now is Mr. Stanway's most dangerous rival — in fact, his only dangerous rival — for the presidency of the Tri-Lake Products and Material Corporation. I have only had a day to go into details of their present organization, so I will be glad if you correct me in any misconception. Stanway has never been a real worker; he inherited from his father a stock interest which got him a sinecure position in a then unimportant department of the company. He happened to employ your father, and his department began to grow till it was doing the biggest part of the business of the company. Stanway was a figurehead; but as he and his relatives held the controlling stock they kept him in office, though, to keep your father, they had to pay him more than Stanway; then Stanway succeeded in transferring your father to another department and instantly Stanway's end began dropping and the new department jumped up. A few years ago, there was nothing to do but make your father general manager and again greatly increase his salary. To satisfy Stanway, they raised him to vice-president, but did not increase his pay. As general manager, your father has made a remarkable record, not only during the boom of the war, but since. I am told that Tri-Lake Products and Materials actually employ more men to-day than last year; their output has increased and they have not missed a dividend.

"Nominally, this has happened under the administration of Dorsett, the president, but his health has been bad for years; his contribution has been chiefly in promoting and backing your father against the Stanway family interest and keeping him a free hand. Stanway, as vice-president, and therefore nominally a superior to your father, has so far succeeded in saving his face.

When Dorsett dies — as he is likely to do any day, I understand — the showdown must come. Your father, I presume, will not remain if Stanway is made president."

"No," said Marjorie. "I've heard him say so; half a dozen other big companies have been after father, Mr. Rinderfeld."

Rinderfeld nodded. "And if your father is made president, Stanway will not stay?" He made that a question.

"Father himself has said he didn't see how Mr. Stanway can; he's referred to father, even in these last years, as 'my clerk' at every possible chance."

"So I have heard. Now, these are no times for a company, which is still taking on men and paying dividends, to indulge in family affections when electing a president for a ten-million-dollar corporation. Stanway knows that his own cousins — or enough of them to make a majority of stock with the other crowd — will vote your father in when Dorsett dies or resigns, unless he can make it impossible. This accident the other night must have seemed to him made for his hand."

Marjorie jerked quickly; through the blur of her brain, attempting to receive and arrange so many amazing ideas so rapidly, suddenly she perceived at what Rinderfeld was aiming.

"You mean, Mr. Rinderfeld," she said, reaching her hand forward to his desk, "that Mr. Stanway knows of — that?"

"Knows?" said Rinderfeld judicially. "He has known about 4689 Clearedge Street, I am quite sure, for some time. Possibly he has been waiting for some such accident as has happened; possibly ——" Rinder-

feld stopped abruptly and more eloquently than by any words he could have said he suggested that which flashed into Marjorie's mind. He seemed to see, by watching her, that he need not say it.

"You mean, Mr. Rinderfeld," she repeated again her address of him, "that Mr. Stanway — caused that?"

Rinderfeld turned and picked up the second goblet from his desk and sipped the water sparingly.

"Causation, my dear young lady," he said, clinging to his abstention from even once repeating her name or her father's, "is always difficult to prove. If you ask me whether I think that Mr. E. H. Stanway's desire to insure his own election to the presidency of the Tri-Lake Products and Material Corporation and the sudden and as yet unexplained recrudescence of interest of Russell in his former wife, whom he deserted and who divorced him, are purely coincidental as to time, I would reply to you that, in my opinion — as yet unsustained by material evidence — they are not."

Marjorie's fingers clenched tightly on the edge of Rinderfeld's desk; she was hot now, tense and eager to fight. She forgot entirely, for the moment, her father's contribution of guilt toward his own undoing. Stanway, his enemy — and hers — had planned the disgrace or, at least, planned to profit by it. For the moment she was stirred against Rinderfeld and almost angry at him for being able himself, when so arousing her, to keep so cool. And Rinderfeld realized this, as he seemed, after a moment's reflection, to realize everything.

"To you, it is, of course, terrible," he said, putting down the goblet carefully on his silver tray. "To me — in what state would I keep myself if I allowed myself

to be torn up about such things? But do not imagine too much; our friend undoubtedly fell far short of expectation of the shooting. There was to be a scene, undoubtedly; that should have been all; that should have been enough. Now, though what has happened has unquestionably exceeded expectations in certain respects, in others it has brought about embarrassments. Russell is not at hand; the rôle of the accuser is therefore vacant. It is never an over-agreeable rôle. The law may have commanded that the sinner be stoned, but when it was suggested that he who was without sin cast the first stone, the crowd melted away, you may remember. Stanway will do nothing openly or directly, however much he knows; he will call, I feel quite sure, upon your mother."

Marjorie stood up because she could sit still no longer. "Now, I know why you sent for me."

Rinderfeld glanced up at her and inclined his head slightly. "Obviously I can not prevent that call; as obviously I can not be at your home to meet him when he comes. You can and you can render him harmless simply and easily, if you will."

"How can I?"

"He will arrive with the idea that he is the bearer of news; you will meet him and when he starts to hem and haw over his story take it up for him and finish it — and him." Rinderfeld suddenly indulged himself in a laugh. "I would like to see him when he finds that he has no news; when he finds that you know, he will not imagine anything but that your mother must also know — and that she is complacent. Then, what can he do?"

Marjorie stared and, in a moment, nodded and Rinderfeld arose. "He has one more barrel to fire,"

he confessed, "but leave the pulling of that charge to me. If I prove mistaken in the expectations I have given you — or if anything else out of the ordinary occurs — communicate with me at once. We understand each other, I am sure, perfectly."

Marjorie nodded again; she recognized that he wished to end their interview, but whereas, before entering this room, she could not have dreamt of wishing to prolong her talk with Rinderfeld, now she would stay. Not because she failed to understand or because she was curious as to what was the other charge of Mr. Stanway's which Rinderfeld planned to pull. She had thought all she could about the threat of Stanway; suddenly it had sunk to secondary importance, and what overwhelmed her was that which had caused her to cry to Doctor Grantham yesterday morning; why had her father done what he did?

Doctor Grantham had avoided answering her; if he himself understood, he would not tell; and now Marjorie doubted the fullness of the doctor's comprehension. She had not even put the question to Billy; and now she thoroughly realized why she had not; for Billy, though a man, was almost as unequipped with experience in such affairs as she. But here was a man with experience beyond any other whom she might meet and who, where he might have been personal and unpleasant, had preserved perfectly the professional throughout this difficult conversation with her. As she thought back upon it, she was amazed at how he had got through it without personal offensiveness and yet imparted to her what he had; she felt she could ask him anything and he could keep it impersonal; and she felt that, when he answered, he could tell her the truth.

"Mr. Rinderfeld!" she said with a sudden appeal, but then stopped.

Rinderfeld glanced at her and waited and, when she did not proceed, he said, "Why did he do it? That is what you want to ask, I know."

"Not Mr. Stanway, Mr. Rinderfeld; I mean ——"

"I know whom you mean," Rinderfeld finished for her. "That is what every woman, who comes here for the first time, wishes to know. Wives they are, usually. I used to try to answer that question; now, I know it is useless; a person who has to ask it admits that she is incapable of understanding the answer. I am very sorry; but I am sure that it is so."

"Why can I not understand? It's not enough to tell me it is because I have to ask that question."

Rinderfeld evidently was not accustomed to so vigorous a rebuttal and, as evidently, he liked it. "No," he said. "You're right; it's not. Though I can't attempt to tell you the other, I can tell you — if you wish — why, in my opinion, you are incapable of understanding. Undoubtedly you consider yourself at least acquainted with men; undoubtedly when you have spoken of your friends, you have said that many of your closest were men and you considered yourself upon as easy a basis with them as with girls; there are men, probably, who — you say — would tell you anything frankly and to whom, you would say, you could tell anything. Is that not so?"

Marjorie startled a little and flushed. "Please go on," she begged.

"Whereas, the fact is that no man you have ever talked to has told you even so much as half the truth. They have told you, probably, how they have felt toward you and your sort, but never how they feel

toward what we may term, for convenience, other women. For you are a good girl; all your friends are good girls, living in prosperous, honorable, protected homes. A man of the sort you meet would consider himself lower than a dog — and his friends would put him down below the lowest cur if they let him live at all — if ever once he adopted within himself an attitude toward you which he may, without loss of a single friend, persistently hold toward other women. When such a man marries a girl like you, one of three things is bound to happen; either he has fallen into the passion which we may call pure love and at least temporarily — and perhaps permanently — he abandons all other attitudes except the one he maintains toward you; or, in another case, he maintains both his former attitude toward you and his other former attitude toward other women, or, in the third, he shows his wife both. In either of the latter instances, I am very likely to hear from some one soon."

He had not avoided her while speaking; but now his glance shifted from her to the dictation machine on his desk. It was plain he considered he had said all he wished and he desired her to go. "Thank you," she said, subdued. "Thank you very much. I am what I am — so ignorant that I can not even understand an answer as to why my father has done what he has — because I live in a prosperous, honorable, protected home, you said. Then, if I did not, I would soon become able to understand?"

Rinderfeld looked up so quickly that he almost jerked. "Too soon," he said sharply. "The women like you who never understand make the world worth living in, I think; I'm not sure," he qualified honestly. "It is one of the anomalies of life I'm trying to make

out purely from a philosophical standpoint. It has nothing to do with my business. At least, don't you try the understanding; leave that, as you leave other unpleasant items, to men like me. We'll handle it for you."

His hand moved slightly on his desk; she did not see him touch a button, but she heard behind her the almost inaudible buzzer on the other side of the wall in the waiting room; and she knew that the signal was given to show in the florid-faced, gray-haired man. Rinderfeld moved, in courtly manner, toward the farther door directly communicating with the hallway.

"At any time telephone me, in emergency, here or at my home number; some one always knows where I am." He had returned wholly to business; and she made a business-like reply and stepped into the hall.

CHAPTER VIII

BEFORE departing from Clark Street with Billy, Marjorie experienced a further enlightening sensation. Billy's presence had nothing to do with it; in fact, it was in opposition to his efforts that she had the experience, for Billy was doing his best to return her as rapidly as possible to her familiar environment of Michigan Avenue and the boulevard route home to Evanston, and to re-immerse her in the formal modes of thinking and feeling which had been hers. But she had no wish to reënter so immediately her world of not even so much as half the truth; and her further experience on Clark Street was suddenly to feel, by one of those flashes of perceptivity which amaze one with a demonstration of one's dull narrowness before, that Clark Street and the streets beyond — west and north and south, in their endless number — concerned her. How vitally and with what intimacy had Clearedge Street concerned her! She wanted to stand on the sidewalk and gaze about at the people passing and think of the men as men of the manner Rinderfeld knew. But Billy had kept a cab waiting for her and he helped her into it.

"Well, Marjorie," he demanded, as soon as the car started. "What did he have to tell you?" So she repeated to him Rinderfeld's analysis of the danger threatening them.

"Of course, I never thought of it that way before," she finished. "But you must have, Billy; you're a

lawyer. Why didn't you explain to me how it would come out — if it does?"

"That's Rinderfeld for you!" Billy countered. "You couldn't have a much better show-up of him; what does he care about the right or wrong of any case? Try to cover up; scrape yourself clear of the consequences; that's Rinderfeld's Bible. He doesn't correct a thing."

"Probably he doesn't," Marjorie admitted. "But he does try to suggest a way in which you may be left alone to settle your own family trouble without the whole world interfering. And I don't believe he thinks I'm trying to scrape out of consequences."

Billy sat away from her, feeling injured and that she had held him cheap; then he saw her face, saw her lips tremble as she tried to steady them, saw her catch herself up bravely, and he was ashamed of himself; he called her name and he caught both her hands between his own big ones.

"Oh, Marjorie, Marjorie, don't you suppose I'd have told you all that, if it could really do you any good? But you'll find out, it won't put off even Stanway! And if it does, it can't save you from facing what's before; and you'll — we'll only make it harder and harder, dearie, by putting it off!"

He drew away one of his hands and hastily pulled down the curtains of the cab and then he put his arm about her and begged her to rest on his shoulder. But she could not. The confidence which she had gained when with Rinderfeld was vanishing. "I'm going to see father now, remember," she reminded Billy.

He had forgotten, though Marjorie had told him, that her given reason for her journey down town to-day

was to visit the hospital. When she arrived, she learned that her father's improvement continued and that she would be allowed to see him for five minutes.

She found him very white in his narrow, white bed in the little, private room, with a nurse beside him; but he was conscious and his head was clear and, indeed, he was not unlike himself. His eyes met hers and gazed into hers in his old, loving manner; his lips smiled at her in fond reassurance.

"I'm going to be all right again soon, Margy," he said, clasping tighter on her hand which she slipped into his.

That weak pressure almost made her cry; and she tossed back her head and shook her tears away. How could he have sinned, as he had, and kept his conscience so clear? Yet it was not strange that his manner toward her had not changed, she reflected after a minute; for she was certain that Doctor Grantham would not yet have informed him of her presence at Clearedge Street; and he was not more guilty to-day than last week or last month or before. The change was in herself, because she had learned; and she wondered if she had never known him with a clear conscience or whether, if she knew the world as Rinderfeld did, she would believe that men like her father regarded his sin so lightly that it cast no cloud over their consciences and that its effect upon them was only the fear of scandal.

She would not let Billy accompany her home; and, starting away alone in the taxicab, she passed another, approaching the hospital, and having one passenger, a woman. Marjorie had only a glimpse of her and more of her figure than her face, but she half leaped from her seat in the certainty that the woman was Mrs. Russell.

Marjorie stopped her cab and waited until she saw that the other car halted before the hospital and the passenger got out and, evidently having told the driver to wait, went into the building. But now she did not look quite so much like Mrs. Russell.

"No," Marjorie argued with herself, "Mrs. Russell would not dare. Rinderfeld would not let her."

She had not mentioned Mrs. Russell to Rinderfeld, yet she had no doubt that he was in charge, too, of Mrs. Russell. Besides, if that woman were Mrs. Russell, what could Marjorie do? She told her driver to go on, and, returning alone to Evanston, she underwent a new emotion as she drove through wide, beautiful avenues of her neighbors' prosperous, honorable, protected homes.

Instead of experiencing merely a renewal of the dread of her neighbors, of their mercilessness if they "found out," she was swept with a sharper pang of shame for the unworthiness of her home to stand among theirs; and the conduct of her father became betrayal, not only of his family, but of all their friends. No wonder Evanston had been slow in accepting newcomers; by choosing to live in a place like Evanston, you made a more definite profession of certain ideals than by going about the business of residing in a different sort of community; you displayed at least a desire for decent, family life and for the more sober and less fleshly enjoyments. So when one did as her father had done, he harmed more than himself and his own; he took advantage of decencies and self-restraints practised by other men — restraints which had made his neighborhood attractive and desirable — and he had betrayed them.

For the moment, Marjorie ranged herself on the side of these other families which had not proved false; and

despairingly she longed that hers might have been one of them.

She had late luncheon at home, for her mother had left for the hospital a few minutes before her arrival. As neighbors were beginning to hear of Mr. Hale's illness, the telephone rang frequently for inquiries; and several calls came from the office and from his friends down town; flowers were delivered and some people stopped in at the house. Marjorie let the servants continue the repetition of the information which the family was giving out; but when Clara Sedgwick called, Marjorie had her come in.

She brought the news that some people were saying that Mr. Hale was not at home, but had been taken to a hospital in Chicago for a serious operation. She was not a gossipy girl, Clara, and she did not try to trick Marjorie into telling more than she wished, but, after frankly relating what she had heard, Clara asked if the Hales wanted it denied.

Marjorie said, yes; probably it was better to deny it, but that it was true; and after Marjorie admitted this, it was plain that Clara was satisfied and suspected nothing more; so Marjorie gained another proof of the astuteness of Felix Rinderfeld who, having a serious secret to conceal, had not made the mistake of publishing a story which hid nothing, but who had supplied a less serious secret for curious friends to discover.

Clara stayed and made an effort to interest Marjorie by going into the details of favors for a dance set for next week; then she launched upon the novelties which were being suggested to the entertainment committee of the golf club to vary the usual monotony of golf for men and bridge for women, on Saturday afternoons through the approaching season. Somebody had sug-

gested a scheme for combining a husband's golf and his wife's bridge score; but George Chaden had a better idea, and one much more applicable to the unmarried; any girl or woman, to be eligible for a bridge prize on Saturday, had to qualify by making a certain golf score during the five days previous; but if she didn't golf, she could — under certain elaborately amusing rules — get a man to qualify her.

Marjorie honestly attempted to become interested but she could not; what filled her mind was amazement that fripperies like these had previously fascinated her and that the planning and performing of them had given her satisfaction. To chatter at teas with girls as like as possible to herself; to dine between two men who had passed the tests of admission to your set; to play bridge with them, sometimes gambling mildly; golf with the same ones and, in the same company, perhaps motor; to go down town in your limousine — or in a neighbor's — to spend two hours weekly in winter in one of the seats in orchestra hall, to which your mother subscribed every year, listening to a Tschaikowsky overture and French and Italian concertos; to sit, also in carefully selected, subscribed-for seats surrounded by your own set, one night a week for the ten weeks of "opera"; to go with your mother or with Clara or Elsie to pick out dress materials at Field's or pick up something ready made in a Michigan Avenue shop; otherwise to spend your days dropping in on your neighbors, or receiving them when they dropped in on you, or idling along Davis Street unless somebody like Lord Dunsany or Tagore had been captured for the afternoon's sensation at the Woman's Club, in which case you'd drop in to look at him and hear a word or two to save you the trouble of reading

his books to see why he made such a stir; — thus Marjorie was totaling her life. In order to instance to herself a single extraordinary event, she had to call up the twenty minutes she spent in an airplane flying over the city and the lake from the hangar just west of Evanston. No wonder Rinderfeld found her so ignorant of the world that he realized it was useless to try to explain what had happened to her; no wonder that the few men, with whom she held anything approaching a conversation, satisfied her when they spoke to her in never so much as half-truths concerning themselves and their world.

It astounded her now suddenly to begin realizing how small and shut in was the world of the daughter and wife of a successful man. Sitting by her window one morning while she watched, fearing the approach of Mr. Stanway or of Russell or some one from Clearedge Street coming in attack upon her home, she counted the delivery wagons which stopped, — the grocer's, the butcher's, the ice van, Marshall Field's, Carson Pirie's, Lord's, a florist's boy, Borden's Creamery, a laundry wagon, one from the cleaner's and a runabout bringing a man to estimate on the decorating to be done soon: eleven bearing to the house materials and service to supplement the service of the three maids and one man established within and to further obviate necessity of effort on the part of her mother and herself. They — Marjorie thought — need not make a single move. As a matter of fact, they frequently telephoned orders and personally purchased some of the articles delivered, but Marjorie could not honestly assign to their activities a higher value than one of furnishing diversion or a feeling of satisfaction at doing something. For she knew that, if they never made a

move, they, in that house, would have been cared for as the house had been cared for without them, when they had been abroad. If any unforeseen difficulty came up, her mother and she were not supposed to face it but to dodge it by supplementing their ordinary corps of servants with experts in domestic emergencies with which such a place as Evanston teemed.

Now her father — or rather Gregg Mowbry acting in the man's place of her father, temporarily disabled — had employed Felix Rinderfeld as a specialist in this present crisis which threatened them; and here she was at home, assigned to duty in aiding in the protection of her mother if Mr. Stanway or Russell eluded them in the outer circle of defense they had flung about her home; but otherwise they were keeping her ignorant even of what they were doing to shield her.

Billy did not know; for, when she asked him, he told her uncomfortably that Gregg and Rinderfeld on that day — it was the same on which she counted the delivery wagons — were up to something; they wouldn't tell him what, but Billy had discovered that Gregg had not been going to his office for a couple of days; and later Marjorie learned that Gregg hadn't returned to the apartment for two nights and Billy was worried.

CHAPTER IX

WHAT had happened was that Russell had reappeared. Not about Clearedge Street; for he was not quite bold enough to show himself there yet; but he had returned to his haunts a little farther south in the city where Cuncliffe's salesman, Nyman, had first heard of him and in the neighborhood of the particular private still with which Russell previously had established a connection. And the cause of Gregg's absence from his office, was that Gregg had been looking for him in that vicinity, for it was just the sort of place where a man who had shot some one else — and who couldn't be sure yet whether he'd be taken up for it or whether he could make big money out of it — would feel his way about for a while.

Gregg learned of the place from Nyman and had refrained from reporting his plans not only to Billy but also to Rinderfeld; for Gregg knew Rinderfeld well enough by that time to become certain that Rinderfeld, knowing what Gregg did, would have insisted upon relieving him — or at least upon reinforcing him — with a professional handler of men like Russell; and Gregg would not have that; first, because he had, himself, to do something violent and effective for Marjorie in these days; and second, he wanted to determine what, and how much of it, was to be done.

The place was one of those bright glass front and dingy clapboard-side saloons, with rattan screen and swinging doors just inside and with black, sour-smelling

floor and long oak bar behind the screen and, in back, a fair-sized, liquor-and-tobacco-reeking room with six round tables and a couple of small, one-table private rooms opening off it. "Kilkerry's" was the name in raised, partly peeled gilt letters on the board over the door from which the draft beer advertisement and the formal "Ale and Porter" plate had been torn in deference to the eighteenth amendment; but everybody knew what Kilkerry's served. It was only for decency's sake that he let his name peel and his clapboards blister; when clearing four times the profit on bad whiskey and gin you ever rung up on good, only the foolish man would forget to look as though he were sunk to ruin on sarsaparillas and vichy waters.

Across those cigar-scorched, dented tabletops Russell had made his original boasts to his companions that he would get satisfaction or Hale; and the patrons of Kilkerry's, having read in the newspapers of the sudden illness of the general manager of Tri-Lake Products and Material Corporation on the same night that Russell disappeared, put two and two together, audibly and often; and openly they announced the answer.

"Sick!" puffed one Simmons, from a chair where, he said, Russell had sat when he, Simmons, occupied the seat Gregg was in. "I bet that bird took sick sudden! The ——— ——— ———. What's matter wi' Russell, damn fool? Doesn't he *want* to collect? Struck oil somewhere, has he? Maybe Uncle Bim died and he don't need no money. Not a peep in the papers, d'you see that? Hale's sick; that's all they dare tell. Say, can Georgie Russell collect?"

So Simmons expected Russell back; all the regulars at Kilkerry's expected him; for there he had boasted;

there he would come to gloat when he considered it safe. At first Gregg looked in at Kilkerry's only a couple of times a day and, between visits, made a few perfunctory calls on possible prospects for refrigeration systems; occasionally he dropped into the gymnasium of an ex-pugilist, a middleweight, who struck hard and taunted his pupils to hit harder. Gregg had boxed a little in college and when in the army; but he was not wasting time brushing up on boxing now. He wanted only the swing of a hit and to regain the knack of taking a blow.

When he became more of a regular at Kilkerry's, he noticed another stranger who was in the process of regularizing himself, also, — a heavy man, tall as Gregg and twice as thick through. He bought just a bit too freely for others, and talked not quite enough, Gregg thought; but nobody else seemed suspicious of the fellow who made himself known by the name of Hershy.

Happening not to be at Kilkerry's when Russell reported, Gregg came into the back room about seven o'clock one evening to find them all together — Simmons and seven or eight of the other regulars, Hershy, who was buying just then, and a big, black-haired, black-browed man who must be Russell. Sybil Russell had chosen physically powerful men, Gregg thought, when he looked over this man who was big as Hale and much younger and with large, strong hands showing black hair on the wrists. Hershy was handing him raw, yellow whiskey and already Russell was drunk; Simmons was spluttering drunk. Hershy was pretending to be drunk.

They had reached the stage in which they were proclaiming Russell as a great moral agent:

"You showed 'im, eh, Georgie! You put 'im in the hospital, I'll say — teach 'im to hang 'round home for a change — teach 'im the ten commandments."

Russell gestured with a great hand for a chance to speak and his voice rose alone. "Did I do right, boys?"

"Eah! Yeah! Do 'im right now, Georgie. Hold 'im up! Tell 'im you've come back to give yourself to the police for shootin' 'im; charge 'im five thousand not to —— And 'ave it on your conscience for five thousand, George? Tell 'im ten and cheap at the price! Heh! Forget the shootin'; go back of it. Sue 'im for alienation of affection — never mind when he met her — say it was whenever you want — he'll pay before he'll 'ave anybody find out why he was at the 'ospital."

Simmons pulled Gregg into the group and pounded his back and Gregg pounded other backs in the celebration over the return of Russell to clean up; his friends were for him and no one was more inseparable from him than Hershy.

Indeed, Hershy evidently wanted Russell all to himself; he bought another round of colored alcohol and Simmons ceased even to splutter; a couple of the others got sleepy and Hershy started leading Russell away. That suited Gregg well enough, especially when he found that Russell refused to let Hershy push him into the cab which Hershy had waiting. It seemed Russell had been arrested once and taken to the station in a cab; Hershy was not quick enough to abandon his original plan, and Russell became frightened and suspicious of him.

"Wha' ziz man want o' me?" Russell appealed, grabbing hold of Gregg's arm. "I ask you, have I ever done anything but right? Was I justified or not?"

Gregg did not make the mistake of trying to lead him; he merely let Russell keep his hold and walked on away from Hershy's cab, leaving Hershy nothing to do but follow when they turned down an alley in the next square beyond Kilkerry's.

It was dark there behind the buildings and nobody about; it was as good a place as could be found for settlement of differences with Hershy, representing — so Gregg was sure — Stanway and polite business blackmail, even lower in its essential than the ugly affair Russell's friends advised.

"Get along, Hershy," said Gregg. "You're not invited."

"Yeah!" agreed Russell. "Get along!"

Hershy's hand came down on Gregg's shoulder and tried to pull him from Russell. Gregg squared around and Hershy struck him on the side of the head.

Gregg's right arm went down; his knees bent; all at once he got together; his arm came up hooked; his knees straightened; and as his whole body was thrusting up, the heavy hulk of Russell's weight slipped off his left side and Gregg almost leaped as he struck Hershy's jaw and knocked Hershy's head back and dropped him in the alley.

"Ka-yo!" gurgled Russell with delight. "Ka-yo! Prop him up and hitimagain."

But Hershy was propping himself up; he was not knocked out, for he moved, feeling for a gun, maybe, Gregg thought, as he got Russell quickly past an ash barrel, up through an area, and went out on the street, with Russell lolling on him in maudlin admiration.

He had to endure the admiration as he supported the big man along. Where? Gregg had never had any too definite destination; now none of those which he had

tentatively fixed on satisfied him. He wanted to take Russell far away, as the first consideration; and he had seen the result of Hershy's attempt to get him into a motor car.

The puffing and bell of a switch engine caught Gregg's ear; a headlight gleamed across the street and gates went down with warning clangor. When Gregg brought Russell to the crossing, he started down beside the tracks without positive intention at first; chiefly he was keeping Russell moving and interested. Then he observed that they were beside a string of box cars, empty probably, which were being made up into a train for return to the west. One car had the door open and, halting, Russell thrust both his hands in the straw on the floor of the car; then, exerting his strength, he sprang up and thrust himself into the car.

The fellow could have had no purpose but, perhaps, to lie down in the straw and sleep; for that was what he did. Gregg, satisfied, got into the car and sat beside him. In a few minutes came the shock and jangle which told that the engine had picked up this string of cars; the train started and, as the car passed the city street lamps, streaks of light entered the door, slowly swept over Gregg and the sleeping form of Russell and left them in the dark again. Then the train gathered speed; the clanging over crossings ceased and the streaks of light were rare and dim; the train was out of the city and, evidently a fast, through freight, would make few stops. The train crew apparently were unaware that any one was in this car; when a brakeman passed on top he never halted and no one had looked into the door.

For Gregg's purpose with Russell, he could hardly have chosen a better place; yet Gregg, as he reviewed

that purpose, never doubted it so much as now. He had heard that Russell was big and strong, yet he had not expected quite all the man he had found; and Russell, when he awoke from this stupored sleep, undoubtedly would be ugly; also he would be rested while Gregg now dared not rest. He had to sit up and watch.

There were other ways to do for Russell, Gregg could not help thinking; but only one sporting one, — one way, that was, in which Gregg Mowbry could do it, or try to do it, and live with himself afterward. If he failed, probably he wouldn't live at all, so there was no use bothering about that. Though he had said nothing to any one else about what he had taken on, he had taken it on with himself; and he wasn't going to quit. So, as the night went darker and colder, he sat beside Russell and watched him. Once Gregg felt over him, found a loaded revolver — likely the one with which Russell had shot Mr. Hale, Gregg thought — and he broke it, strewed the shells beside the track and tossed the weapon down into a river. Then, thinking of Marjorie and of Billy and of Mr. Hale and Mrs. Russell and Marjorie again — Marjorie — he sat on the floor beside Russell and waited for him to wake.

CHAPTER X

BESIDE a country station, about midnight, the train halted and switched and backed with a banging jolt against a string of cars which it was coupling on.

As the shock reached Russell, he sat up. "Whoinel done that to me?" he demanded belligerently and blearing at Gregg in the streak of light from the depot. "Say, dudyou do me that dirty trick?"

His geniality and his admiration of Gregg were entirely gone; he did not recall his companion at all. "Say, whoth'ell are you? What you want? Wheream I?"

"Go to sleep," said Gregg; and Russell stared about, evidently discerned nothing particularly disturbing and lay down again with eyes open for a while and mumbling to himself; but when the train went on, he soon was asleep.

It was almost daylight when Russell next awoke and the train was running about thirty miles an hour, Gregg guessed, through a broad, level farming section with widely separated stations, and those only in small country towns and villages — sometimes little more than a crossroads and watertank — which the freight had been passing with whistle screaming and without even slowing. This time Russell was clear in the head; in fact, before he stirred at all or even opened his eyes wide, he had been conscious for some minutes, Gregg

suspected, and he had been trying to place himself and estimate his situation.

At this, he soon succeeded at least to the point of deciding that it was not risky for him to sit up.

"Good morning," he said soberly and cautiously.

Gregg rose to his feet to warm himself and lessen his stiffness from the long chill of the night; a few minutes before he had felt tired and weakened and slow; but his pulse was tapping rapidly now and pounded with fuller flow as Russell, wary of being taken at disadvantage, also got to his feet. He faced Gregg, who had his back to the side of the car forward of the open door; Russell backed to the closed door opposite and spread his arms wide along the wood to steady himself.

He had long, powerful arms and he was a good two inches taller than Gregg as he drew himself up; but, in any emergency which might confront him, he evidently meant not to depend solely on his physical superiority. Suddenly he dropped his right arm and his hand went to that trouser pocket from which Gregg had removed the revolver. Not finding his weapon, his hand quickly shifted to other pockets and he glanced at the floor where he had lain, darted his gaze to the corners of the car and then he looked at Gregg.

"You got that?"

"I took it," Gregg said; and quietly, without ostentation, he put his hand in the side pocket of the light overcoat he was wearing and, when his hand was hidden, he straightened his forefinger toward Russell and bulged the pocket.

"What in hell do you want?" Russell said next.

"Do you remember me?"

Russell drew his brows down as he gazed at Gregg and deliberated what to say. "No," he answered first;

and then, sullenly, "I suppose you were in Kilkerry's last night."

"Yes; that's where we met."

"You took me out of there, eh?"

"No; another friend of yours took you out; I got you from him outside."

Russell considered this for a while; evidently he had no recollection of Hershy. "'Nother friend of mine; call yourself a friend of mine, do you?" he challenged.

"No," said Gregg, flatly.

"Who the hell are you? Say, have you got a drink about you?"

"No."

"How about water?"

"No."

"Where're we going?"

"West; the last town I noticed was Foseca; I suppose it's in Illinois or southern Wisconsin."

"Well, what's the big idea?"

"Mowbry's my name; I'm a friend of Charles Hale, whom you shot, and I'm more a friend of his daughter."

"Oh."

"There's no use my wasting time telling you what you're trying to do; we both know it; and there's no use wasting time talking to you about it. I'm going to beat you up first."

Gregg stopped and stood as steadily as the swaying of the car allowed, while Russell stared at his face, stared down at his bulging pocket and stared up again. Russell, of course, did not yet understand.

So Gregg told him: "I'm going to beat you up, fair if I can; if you fight dirty — I suppose you will — we'll have to go at that. I'm going to beat you up, I

said, first thing. I've been waiting for you all night. Let's go."

"Go?" said Russell, bracing himself back against his door and otherwise not moving. There was a trick somewhere, he was sure; this smaller, more lightly built man, of refined face and bearing, was going to cripple him first, Russell thought; either by shooting him or holding him helpless with the revolver while he did what he planned.

"Go, I said," Gregg repeated. "If I wanted just to beat you up, I had all night to do it in." He slipped off his overcoat and suit coat together and dropped them on the floor, his hands coming out bare and clenched.

Russell saw that and lunged forward to catch him at that instant; this Mowbry, Russell thought, had made a slip and for a second was unprepared, having lost hold of the revolver. Probably he expected Gregg to side-step and dodge. But Gregg did just the opposite thing. As Russell came, he stepped toward him and came up under and inside Russell's arm and caught him with right fist full on the jaw.

It was a harder blow than the one, like it, which had dropped Hershy; it was hard as Gregg could hit. But it did not drop Russell. It did not even send him back; it stopped him, confused him for the instant in which Gregg stepped free from the clench of Russell's big arms and recognized that he had a job before him even bigger than he had thought.

"You —— ——," said Russell and spit. Gregg rushed him, hit his face once, hit his wind and got knuckles on his own head, — the left side of the head and then the right; in the neck; then, when he saw Russell start to rush, Gregg gave way.

He couldn't stand up to that weight, he realized; and, sucking for breath, he backed and side-stepped into the front end of the car, his neck hurting and his head banged half dizzy. "But I got to him, too!" Gregg told himself; and, waiting till Russell was sure he was backing to the end, he sprang forward, hooked his right to Russell's face, got hit on the head, but also he got by and escaped to the side and backed off before Russell down the car.

Reason clamored to Gregg that he was beaten; Russell already had him running away in an enclosure, chosen by himself, in which he could not successfully run. But Russell didn't press him; Russell could not believe the fight was meant to be fair; what confused Russell was his certainty of a trick. He followed Gregg down the car as far as the open door beside which Gregg had dropped his coats; then, feinting a rush, Russell suddenly stooped and snatched up the coat which, he supposed, held the revolver. In that second, Gregg saw his chance and was on him, right and left to Russell's head; Russell shook, crouched, tried to dodge and then took it, right and left pounding him again. "Worth it," Russell undoubtedly was figuring, to get his gun again.

Gregg couldn't tell whether Russell discovered the revolver wasn't in the pocket or whether he wouldn't stand the battering any longer; anyway, Russell dropped the coat, lunged at Gregg, rushed him and, not trying to strike, he grabbed at Gregg's arms; got one, the right; grabbed it hard, twisting and, at the same second, swinging himself and swinging Gregg to hurl him against the side of the car.

But Gregg pulled up on him, clenched and was clenched; so they went down, arms winding each other,

trying to strike, trying to hold. Breath went out of Gregg; he was underneath; weaker, much weaker than Russell in such crushing grapple; Russell's hand grabbed his neck and Russell's fingers closed on his throat; and even when Gregg raised the big bulk of Russell's body off his chest, breath now would not come in. Gregg was choked and knew that Russell meant to hold on and would throttle him. For an instant the shutting-off of breath, along with that realization, made Gregg weaker; then he concentrated his strength; turned over, turning Russell with him; he got on top of Russell but did not break the hold of those big, broad fingers on his windpipe; but Gregg's arms were free now and he beat with his fist on Russell's mouth, smashing in something — teeth; he pounded and pounded again. Russell couldn't stand that. He almost let go of Gregg's throat; anyway, Gregg got a breath and for it beat harder on Russell's face, smashed his mouth again, and his cheekbones, his brows, drawing blood; it was hot and sticky on Russell's face and on Gregg's knuckles when he struck, and Russell at last let go.

Gregg freed himself and got up, Russell rolling the other way, also raising himself; so they faced each other half the car's length apart, with the open door of the freight car on the side between them.

The train was running on, whistling; the car swayed and Gregg, going dizzy, put one hand to the wall to steady him; Russell did not so need to brace himself; but he was a frightful sight with blood over his face from a break over his left eye and from his nose and from his mouth; blood had even streaked into his black hair when he rolled over; but Gregg knew that, bloody as he was, Russell was marked more than hurt. Gregg was hardly marked at all, but half his strength seemed

gone; partly he'd spent it; partly those minutes — for it was minutes — of lung-breaking breathlessness had exhausted him; partly it was stun from blows on his head. It was of his head that he was most conscious; it was heavy and now light-feeling; then heavy again. The car seemed to swirl and swing about an endless curve; his eyes closed of themselves and he had to make conscious efforts of will to keep them open; his knees wanted to weaken and let him drop and lie on the floor.

"This man will kill me now," he had to remind himself to keep up. "This man will kill me, if he can. Now he's coming to do it."

For Russell was advancing on him; and Gregg jerked his head up and straightened. He raised his left arm for guard and Russell, having no plan to strike, grabbed it and pulled back, swinging Gregg toward the wide-open door.

"He's throwing me out!" Gregg recognized, and tried to pull up on Russell and clench with him as before; but this time Russell stopped that or Gregg was too weak. Russell pulled back farther and got Gregg swinging; so Gregg let his knees go and let himself drop. This brought him nearer to Russell; but not near enough, for Russell was able to raise him as he swung and keep him almost clear of the floor. Russell pulled up higher to swing Gregg entirely free; he had him almost to the door now; and Russell let go and flung him. Too soon; a half of a half-second too soon; for Gregg struck the side of the car at the very edge of the door; he bumped back and slid down directly at the opening, and Russell, following, kicked him to send him out; but Gregg grabbed the leg. Gregg's own legs went out over nothing — out the door that meant —

as he hugged to Russell's leg and held on. Then Russell began going down; his other leg went out from under him; for a dizzy, spinning instant, Gregg grabbed to nothing which had any support; they were going out the car door together, Gregg thought; and he closed his eyes, waiting the crush of them together beside the rails. Then Russell came down on the car floor and Gregg crept up on him, pulling himself within the car again. Russell was the weaker one now; Russell was the dizzier one; for he'd come down and banged his head on the car floor.

Gregg got up and stood over him. "Get up!" he said; and Russell got up; and, as he reached his feet, Gregg struck him and knocked him to the left; struck him with all his strength and knocked him to the right.

"Get up!" Gregg threatened him again; and Russell got up; for he would have murdered Gregg; he had tried to kill him; and he could imagine nothing but that, if he lay there, this Mowbry, friend of Charles Hale, would kill him. So, on the right side of his head and then on the jaw on the left, Gregg gave it to him again. "Get up!"

Gregg never quite knocked him "out"; perhaps he could not have done it even now, so stubborn and enduring was Russell's strength; but he was not trying to; he knocked him down a dozen times that he counted and then he kept on punishing him while Russell, still sure that he meant to kill him, kept coming up to fight; so Gregg pounded and cut and beat him — "beat him up," as men say — till Russell at last, though still conscious, was helpless and done, utterly finished. Gregg himself was almost as exhausted.

It was an unforgettable, bloody business, at the end of which Russell lay flat on the floor of the car, his

face and almost his whole head swollen and spongy red, his eyes almost closed, his lips immense. Not possibly could he ever forget it; as Gregg moved now and spoke to him, he jerked and quivered. Gregg himself was almost finished from his own terrible effort; he felt sick and his swollen, bleeding hands ached torturously. But he had won; and that meant more than the mere knowledge that from this savage encounter he had emerged with Russell at his mercy; he was sure now that, as he had dreamed and had planned, Russell could never completely recover from this beating. Physically, he would recuperate, of course; within a week he would be strong as ever; but Gregg believed he had cut through the mere physical into the morale and had "got Russell's nerve"; Russell would never be the same man again. One who has been utterly beaten, never can "come back," fighting men say.

So Gregg let Russell lie a while and look up at him and wonder what was to happen next, and then, as he quivered and shrank again when Gregg moved, Gregg said loudly and slowly and distinctly:

"You know why you got that; if ever you show up in Chicago again or open your mouth about Charles Hale, you'll run right into the same, only more of it — the same, you understand; just exactly the same but more. I'll prop you up to keep hitting you next time; prop you up and bring you to and prop you up again. By God, I feel like it now, you ——"

At that Russell screamed, "No!" and, not daring to move for fear of drawing the blows on his swollen head, he lay just quivering in stark, man's hysterics; and so Gregg believed he had "got" Russell.

It was over and done; and Gregg turned away and stood at the edge of the door, gazing out over the

black, harrowed fields edged by grass and bushes budding green, over which the April sun was rising; and he tried to think about what he had done.

This was, after all, a good deal what he had hoped for, though it had proved worse, — harder and more savage and brutal than he had expected; and yet he should have known that it would be. But, however revolting to him, it had to be done; there was no other way he knew, short of actually killing Russell, which would save Marjorie from the shameful shadow of blackmail as the alternative to open, published disgrace and scandal spread before all the world. There was no end to blackmail, once you started paying it; each payment, instead of clearing you, only got you deeper in the toils of the blackmailer; and to think of Marjorie paying Russell to keep silent, of him coming to her with demands which she dared not refuse — no, horrible as this had been to Gregg, he was glad he had done it.

All but exhausted as he was, yet a new exhilaration sustained him and surprised him. He had beaten up Russell so that Russell would never be the same again without thinking that he, from the inflicting of that same beating, also must change; he had roused and loosed from within him a power of passion which he had not suspected he possessed and which now he could not down; nor would down if he could.

He thought of the Gregg Mowbry of a few days ago almost as a stranger to this bruised, aching, spent man clutching to the side of the freight car; and he thought what a boy he had been when he had imagined that he could take on this fight for Marjorie and, when he had finished it, feel satisfied to have done something for her. He was never so unsatisfied in all his life as now, never

so certain that, whatever the cost, whatever the penalty, he was going to face life fully; he had to laugh at the Gregg Mowbry who, a few days ago, was dodging desire of what he might not have for the fear of the hurt to him.

He kept tight hold of the edge of the door, sucking in the clean, cool morning air; and his mind came down to practical matters. Here was Russell out of the way and, for the time at least, useless; and Mr. Hershy, of Kilkerry's and the alley "kayo," was probably to have a bad half-hour reporting to Mr. E. H. Stanway this morning. But, without Russell, was Stanway helpless; or had he another move?

A move — whether Stanway's or not, was uncertain — already was in the mail which was delivered at the Hale's door in Evanston about ten o'clock that morning. Before this hour, Mrs. Hale had gone out as she always made an early start of her day, particularly since now she had added a visit to the hospital to her routine; her letters therefore were placed on a stand in the hall and Marjorie, passing by, noticed an envelope addressed to her mother in peculiar characters evidently formed by an adult but printed by a pen. There was no clue to the sender other than the postmark of Chicago, but it was such an unusual looking letter to come to that house that Marjorie picked it up. She never had opened a letter addressed to another, but she did so now and stared at a plain sheet of paper upon which was printed by pen:

If you don't want to keep your eyes shut to what Mr. Hale has been up to, and if you care to know what ails him now, ask some neighbors about Mrs. (?) Sybil Russell, 4689 Clearedge Street.

This was unsigned.

It was Marjorie's first experience with an anonymous letter and the cowardice of it filled her with loathing. She crumpled tight the envelope and enclosure and burned both immediately. Going out to a public booth where she might not be overheard, she telephoned Felix Rinderfeld, who approved her action and expressed the belief that nothing more dangerous was likely to follow from that anonymous source. However, he added that he was very glad to talk with her for he had been about to send her word that one of the events which he had been anticipating was soon to happen; affairs were so working out that Mr. Stanway was to be expected to call in person to see Mrs. Hale. Rinderfeld could not be certain of the exact time, but Stanway might arrive this afternoon; he would not be later than to-morrow.

CHAPTER XI

IT proved to be on the second day, which was a mid-April Tuesday, rainy and cold, as it happened, with a raw wind from the north. Mr. Stanway's car appeared shortly after four-thirty, and Marjorie, upon recognizing it, stood at her window and watched it come up to the house. She had been waiting for it and she was dressed so as to be able immediately to meet Mr. Stanway but, as she observed his approach, she was seized by such a paralysis as one experiences occasionally in nightmares; she felt as if threatened with annihilation and knew she must move but she could not.

The approaching motor was a trim, dark maroon-enameled coupé of the town car pattern, which exposed the driver to the pouring rain without even a projection of the top to shelter him, while the single passenger, of course, sat in the perfect dryness and comfort of the upholstered seat behind the glass. The ostentatious use of such a car on such a day always angered Marjorie, particularly when she knew the owner possessed other cars; and it always had made her father indignant. He never let himself be guilty of such disregard of any one in his employ. When Leonard drove in bad weather, it was in a Berline, which protected him, too.

Marjorie suddenly found herself freed from her seizure of helplessness and she hastened into the hall

in time to hear Mr. Stanway ask for Mrs. Hale in his crisp, affected voice.

He always spoke with an "English" inflection to which he added an air of aloofness in his manner of standing and gazing at one; and he strove for — and undoubtedly to some, he attained — distinction in his clothes. Marjorie had never seen him, even about the office, in a practical business suit such as her father wore in daytime; and now his tall, ascetic-looking figure appeared more disdainful than usual in a buttoned black cutaway coat of the severest English fashion with gray and black striped trousers without a visible wrinkle. He did not — when in Chicago, at least — go so far as to assume a single eyeglass, but he suggested the effect by wearing about his collar a narrow black ribbon which went to pince-nez, usually in his waistcoat pocket, but which he took in his hand and held up toward his thin, narrow nose when he wished to be impressive. Marjorie had never seen the glasses actually in place on his nose since he had begun carrying them about five years ago when his hair first showed gray.

He pulled them from his pocket now as she neared him and held them up in his usual manner as though, without them, he could not recognize her.

"Ah! How do you do?" he replied to her in one tone, after she had spoken his name. "How do you do? You are Miss Hale, undoubtedly; of course I know you, Miss Mary Hale; or is it Martha?"

"My name's Marjorie," she told him, and was furious at herself; he always at first was doubtful about her; always forgot her name; and, always, as now, he patronized her afterwards.

"Of course, I remember well when you were born;

your father was working in my office, I recall. No one had appreciated him then but myself; I soon became sure he had a great future. That was nineteen years ago, was it? Or twenty?"

"I am twenty-two," Marjorie said; and again was furious.

"It doesn't seem that long ago. Where is your mother? She is in?"

Marjorie led him to the far end of the drawing-room where ordinary tones could not be overheard and where no one could approach them without being seen.

"Mother has gone out," she said. "But she may return soon. Do you want to talk to me while waiting for her, Mr. Stanway?"

She had embarked, with those words, upon her prepared plan, and they sounded rehearsed and forced to her; she sat down, without waiting for him to be seated, and she glanced up at him to see if he was sensitive to the falseness of her tone. It was true that her mother was away from the house, for Marjorie had manœuvered that; it was also true, in the sense that it was possible, that her mother might return; but Marjorie had no idea of permitting him to wait till the time of her probable return. He, however, seemed to suspect nothing. He had dropped his glasses into his pocket and was peering with apparent interest about the big, well-furnished room. He would like to find something showy or in bad taste in this home of his equal, who had been his clerk, Marjorie thought; and she glowed warmly with triumph that he could not so pronounce anything he saw; her mother's taste in furnishing had been restrained and good; and her father, too, liked the really graceful and beautiful more than the merely conspicuous.

"It is the first time I have had the pleasure of being in your home," Stanway said at last, sitting down and evidently abandoning his quest of bad furniture.

Marjorie ignored that remark, which only admitted his persistent refusal to recognize her father as his equal. "Equal?" she repeated to herself; this pretentious, supercilious incompetent, who was determined to obtain for himself the rewards and honor of work without doing the work himself — indeed, while disdaining to look and act as if he ever worked. He was no equal to her father.

Her father really worked and he was proud of it; he looked like a worker and he wanted to; and she swore with herself that, whatever else happened, this man should not seize for himself what her father had created and earned; not he who dared not himself openly throw the stone of scandal at her father; not he who had first endeavored through Russell — so Felix Rinderfeld at least believed — to ruin her father so that he could put himself in her father's place; not he who was here now to set her mother to his task for him.

"It is impossible for me, I suppose, to step upstairs, while I am waiting, to see your father?" he said, with a slight, dubious rise of his voice.

"Impossible," Marjorie replied quietly, closing her lips firmly and bracing herself with her hands on the sides of her chair. "Did you come here expecting to be able to see him, Mr. Stanway?"

"I have heard, of course, that he is much improved; but I have heard also that his condition was originally much more serious than at first given out."

"It was; what else have you heard, Mr. Stanway?"

He gazed at her, blinked and fingered for his glasses.

"What else, Mr. Stanway, have you come to let us hear?"

"Let you hear?" said Stanway.

Marjorie stood up. She felt little; and she wished for height. She had not felt small in the chair; but now she longed for tallness and strength, not perhaps to put her hands on him and show him out, but at least to stand, more dignified, before him and not so much shorter, as he too got to his feet.

"We know what you have come to tell us, Mr. Stanway," she said, resorting again to a phrase she had prepared. "We knew even that you were coming this afternoon to tell us. That is why my mother is not seeing you; I have undertaken to meet you in her place. But to save you trouble, please believe me that I know everything you do. I am quite sure."

She looked up at him directly and with steady eyes and tight-shut lips and with burning face. For an instant, as he gazed down at her, a wave of fright swept her. Suppose Rinderfeld were wrong; suppose this man did not know, or, at least, had not known, what had she told him? What had she put into his hands? But she continued to look into his small, crafty eyes and her terror passed. Finish his story for him — and finish him, Rinderfeld had said; and so she went through with it.

"I mean, particularly, about George Russell and about the Mrs. Russell who used to be his wife, Mr. Stanway," she said in a low voice but distinctly, "and the particular number on Clearedge Street which you have in mind. We do not know all we would like about your own connection with Russell; if you want to tell us about that, we will be very glad to hear you. Other-

wise, you will excuse me, I am sure; and you will continue to excuse mother."

It was not quite what she had prepared; it was formed from parts of a longer declaration with phrases picked out here and there. She had prepared nothing to say after it; for she had not thought of anything she could say; he must go at once, she thought. When he did not, but merely stood gazing down at her, his glasses on his nose at last, she went white and weak under his scorn as his thin, contemptuous lips parted slightly and he smiled; then she flamed red and furious, — so furious that, if she had been a man, she would have run him out of the house but, being a girl and small, she herself fled upstairs to her room, where she flung herself on her bed and cried and cried.

Below, doors opened and closed, and from outside came the hum of a starting motor. Mr. Stanway had gone; but the fact that she had succeeded in sending him off did not lessen her despair at her own self-degradation. She had never before sunk to such dishonor; she had not even imagined herself one of those capable of resorting to such baseness; and so, perhaps because of this, she had actually prepared her meeting with Mr. Stanway along lines which Rinderfeld had suggested, without realizing how she was involving herself. For not till after she had actually said her words to him and found him gazing down at her in a way he never could have before did she feel how she had degraded herself and demeaned her mother.

Mr. Stanway had said not an audible word to her when she had finished; but the curl of his thin, supercilious lip and the contempt in his little, gray eyes would live with her — she was sure — forever. For she, not her father, had brought contempt upon her family; she

had seen contempt come to Mr. Stanway; he had not had it before; though he had arrived, undoubtedly, with full knowledge of her father's sin, still he had arrived with fear of her father.

So, in another respect, the astounding statements of Rinderfeld — which rang through her head — were proving correct. It appeared that a man could do as her father had done and his associates become aware of it without that fact's destroying him; without, indeed, its earning him even their contempt. But for his women to condone it, ah, that was a different matter! And after that downstairs door was closed, and that motor of the town car started, Marjorie would have thrust herself up from her bed, if it would have done any good, and cried out that she had lied; she had falsified and dishonored her mother. It was only herself who knew and who made no move; she would proclaim that her mother — if she knew — would act openly, relentlessly and with utter disregard of all other consequences.

If her mother had returned home just then, almost certainly she would have learned from Marjorie; but she did not come until after six o'clock and before that hour, arrived Billy.

CHAPTER XII

IT was earlier than usual for him on a week-day evening, but her mother had telephoned him from the hospital, inviting him out to dinner.

He had received a telegram from Gregg from Freeport, Illinois, blandly informing that Gregg would be home that night. Of course it relieved Billy, as he supposed Gregg meant he was all right, but Gregg had no right to go off like that without a word to him. Billy was in reproachful mood and he continued it with Marjorie. "You do nothing but mope about the house, your mother says," Billy reproved her fondly, as he held her before him after kissing her. "You must be out more and doing things."

"What things?" said Marjorie; and Billy did not particularize. His big, tender heart was feeling for her all it could, these days; and his conscience seemed crammed with a cargo as heavy and sinking as lead.

"Of course I understand," he said, gazing down at her beside him as she led him, somewhat as she had Mr. Stanway, away to the far, quiet corner of the drawing-room. He longed to lift her small, soft body and hold her against him and cradle her in his big, strong arms; but she did not like such physical contact, he knew. Sometimes he wondered if she would ever like it; or if she would have, if that paralyzing disclosure of her father's sin had not come to her on the night they became betrothed. He believed she would; for naturally she had strong, physical feelings

and she used to express them. Yearning for her as she had been, and as she might now be with him, he put more emphasis in, "You can't feel like yourself, and I can't feel like myself, Marjorie — I'm not even doing my work right at the office — as long as we're hiding from other people and from ourselves, dear. Sweetheart, we're just putting off, from weakness, what we know we have to face and we're making it harder for ourselves and every one else, when we have to do it in the end."

"Do what?" said Marjorie miserably, wanting no answer for of course she knew. So, for answer, he took one of her hands and held it, soft and yielding, in his own. They were sitting together on a lounge.

"Concealment, dear, is about the most dangerous thing in the world, besides putting those who help conceal almost in the position of — of the one who did the thing concealed, Marjorie," he went on. "It is concealed, suppressed acts or even only suppressed ideas and fears which bring about all sorts of abnormal states of morals and mind and even of health, the psychologists are finding out now. You can't live a lie, even if you think you're doing it successfully, without something about it getting you. And, Marjorie, you can't live with concealed — sin."

He clasped her hand firmer at that, but she let hers lie as limp and relaxed as before. She heard what he was saying but she was not thinking about it; she was thinking about him, and flashes of feeling for him, alternating with queer, dull periods of almost antagonism, surprised her. How big and healthy he was, and all clean. She was not religious; as a child she had attended Sunday school, as a matter of habit, where she had learned the ten commandments and the

catechism and, of course, heard a good deal of the old testament and most of the new; but it had been a matter of rote or formalism. When she was about sixteen, and undergoing the spiritual emotions common to that age, she had been sufficiently gratified by the forms of the Episcopal Church so that she had become "confirmed"; but soon afterwards she had ceased attending oftener than at some occasional service. Religion — that was, the belief in a just and judging God, a dispenser of rewards and of retribution — had not become a part of her; it is the modern fashion to dismiss superior "judgments" and fear of retribution as superstition. And Marjorie was modern. When Billy expressed a belief of that sort, she could not help feeling superior to him at the same time that, also, she envied him. He was religious; every Sunday morning he was to be found in one of the pews of the big Presbyterian church on the Drive near East Pearson Street. In an indulgent sort of way, she liked that in Billy; it was a reassuring fact about him — to have his religion sincere — but she never quite saw what benefit it gave him. Now she did; for he had something, which she had not, to cling to. You couldn't cling to what she had — a perfect verbal memory of the ten commandments and articles of faith which you didn't believe. Yet she did not agree that Billy was right. People did live with concealed sin; it was only a child's tale that they could not. Rinderfeld's prosperity was an open denial of such superstition; for his business was, after all, the successful concealing of sin and the prevention of punishment.

"Can you live better with scandal, Billy?" she said, trying to keep her voice from being hard but not wholly succeeding.

"Much better, Marjorie, in the end. Oh, sweetheart, I feel the awfulness of it, too; but we've got to go through it or ——"

"Or what?"

"We can never be happy, you and I; your father can never be happy; or your mother."

"Mother's happy now — now that she feels father will be well again. She's planning again to go to Europe, just as she used to, only on the second May sailing of the *Aquitania* instead of the April."

"That's false happiness, as you perfectly well know," Billy said with a difficult effort to keep patience.

"How much happiness is, Billy? I have been moping about a lot, recently; but moping means thinking some. My home is dishonorable; but it required at least four accidents, all to happen together, before even I could suspect it. First, there was the accident — for it was no more than that — that Mrs. Russell had been married and so Russell was in a position to cause trouble; second, the accident that he was of the disposition to threaten; third, that father was in the position to make it worth his while; fourth, Doctor Grantham happened to have a new assistant who bungled the address and knew no better than to call me. If any of these first chances had fallen the other way, I'd be happy as ever; and if they all fell as they did, and Doctor Grantham hadn't a green girl in his office, to-night I'd be worrying only about father's health."

"But it would have been false happiness, Marjorie."

"Are you sure we can spare false happiness, Billy? Is there enough of the other to go all around?"

His hold on her limp hand had been relaxing; now he let go entirely. "Marjorie!" he whispered in horror.

"Four or five thousand men working for Tri-Lake Products and their wives and children can stand a little more false happiness this year, I'll believe, if you could ask them."

"What are you talking about?"

"Father; and concealed sin; and false happiness. Mr. Stanway has been here this afternoon, Billy, to call on mother, his first call at our home, so he could tell her about Clearedge Street and have her start the scandal for him which would force father out and put him in father's place. Mr. Rinderfeld told me he was coming so I sent mother out this afternoon, and I saw him and spiked his gun by telling him that I knew all about it." She gasped at her memory and then, "I told him — that is, I as well as told him — that mother knew, too. That was false; a direct, black, low lie, Billy. It slandered mother. I could have bitten my tongue out for it after I said it. If she'd come in, I'd have told her everything. But then I got thinking again of Mr. Stanway in father's place — after he put Russell up to making that trouble; that's what he did, Mr. Rinderfeld thinks. Did I tell you that the other day?"

"No," said Billy. "What difference does it make?"

"Whether he put Russell up to it? Billy!"

"I meant, what Rinderfeld thinks. That man's absolutely depraved. I wish you'd never refer to anything he said."

"I think of what he said any number of times a day."

"Why?"

"Because he's told me so much that's true that I never heard before. Because he looks on people as

they are, I think, Billy. He's helped me more than any one else."

"Rinderfeld!" Billy breathed with redoubled loathing.

"Oh, Billy, you and I can't go together on this; for it hasn't done the same to you and to me. It really hasn't made any difference to you at all."

"What do you say?" Billy turned directly to her and with his strong fingers seized her small shoulders and held her facing him. "You've no right to say that; you must be mad, Marjorie. There's never happened anything in my life ——"

"That has made you feel as much," Marjorie finished quickly. "Oh, that I know; but it hasn't started you *thinking*, Billy; it hasn't twisted everything around for you and forced you to find yourself all over again. You're — going on just as you used to. You're separating people, as the Sunday-school cards used to show pictures of God doing, into a flock of sheep and a flock of goats; you see a person, Billy, as good, or you see him as bad. That's an awfully easy and convenient way to class people — as long as you can let it satisfy you. I mean, as long as you can make it work. It tells you just how you ought to do; to know the good people, of course, and admire them and make them your friends and do business with them and to avoid the bad. Now you used to suppose that father was good; and when this happened and you found out you'd made a mistake, that was a big surprise to you and a frightful shock; but it didn't do any more than shock you, Billy. It didn't drive you out of yourself to make over all your ideas; for you simply had to slip father, in your mind, from the side where you keep your list of good men, whom you admire, to the side

of the bad whom you don't want to have anything to do with. But that arrangement's too easy for this, Billy; it won't work with me."

Her breath gave out but not her will or her courage; he was holding her so rigidly that he hurt her, but she scarcely knew it. She kept her eyes straight on his and rushed on.

"Father's been false to mother and false to my ideal of him; but he's not been false to his business and the men — the thousands of men with their families — who have work this spring, when millions of men just like them are idle. They have that work because my father's a big, able, useful man. He has absolute honor in his commercial contract; he's a better leader, a better executive and he has more foresight and courage than any other man who would step into his place, if he were ruined. And the world never needed a man like him more than now, when most concerns are laying off men by the thousand or shutting down entirely, and Tri-Lake is taking men on. That's not nothing; that's a big, invaluable quality! It's easy enough to say he's bad; but, in all but one part of his life, who is better? Knock down father and who, besides Mr. Stanway, would thank you? Anyhow, I'll not see Mr. Stanway taking his place. But I was almost ready to wreck everything, for the sake of feeling right, when you came."

"Then why in the world aren't you now?"

"Because you're so sure it must be right; and right isn't always the best; it's only always the obvious thing to do."

"Rinderfeld," said Billy, "I suppose, taught you that."

"No; I just saw it for myself, after talking with him."

Billy became conscious of the rigor of his hands and he relaxed his grasp of her. "You've made me perfectly sure what I must do, Marjorie. I knew you'd been — deteriorating under this terrible strain. It had to damage you; no one could stop that; but I can stop the damage from keeping on. Therefore, when your mother comes in, I shall end this deceit and concealment."

"You mean ——"

"I shall tell her."

Marjorie threw herself forward so quickly that she freed herself from his hands but only to seize the lapels of his coat with both her own. "No, you won't!" She fought him and tried, with her small strength, to shake him. "You won't; not now after I've lied to Mr. Stanway to-day and beaten him and got him off; and after I've seen Rinderfeld and — and after everything else I've done. You shan't tell her. Not now. What you have not said, you can always say, Billy; but when you've said it, you can never take it back. So tell me you won't; tell me you won't; tell me ——" Her voice suddenly was gone; her strength, which she had gathered all together in the attack of her hands on him, also was gone; her arms dropped; her head fell forward and she gasped and choked, deadly sick; so Billy grasped her, calling her name and crying for help in his alarm.

"No," she whispered. "No." She managed to motion to forbid him calling in a servant. "I'm all right."

"Marjorie!" he besought her, in his fright. "What have I done? What can I do for you? Tell me!"

"Go!" she whispered. "Go, Billy; just go! Leave me alone! Don't do anything but — go!"

She got upon her feet and led him to the door, and, obeying her in fright that, if he did not, she would be stricken again, he went.

She lay on the lounge for a while after he had departed but soon ascended to her room; she had bathed her face and arranged her hair and changed her dress before her mother entered the house and came to her.

"Where is Billy, dear?" she asked. "Martin tells me he has been here and has gone."

"Yes," said Marjorie. "We had a quarrel, I'm afraid."

Her mother kissed her. "People in love have little difficulties, dear. They'll smooth out, you'll find. I've good news to-night. Your father is so much stronger that he can come home to-morrow."

Marjorie started.

"Why, what's the matter, Marjorie."

"Nothing, mother. I was wondering if it was perfectly safe; that's all."

CHAPTER XIII

BILLY drove cityward, worrying and feeling injured; his worry had so much the ascendant during the first of his journey that he stopped at Devon Avenue and telephoned to Marjorie; after he heard her voice reassuring him about herself, but not asking him to return, he proceeded with deeper feeling of injustice done him. He had tried to do right and tried to make Marjorie do the right and also, he was sure, the best for her in the end; and he was discouraged and baffled by the result.

He did not feel like eating so he put up his car and went to his apartment where he had been alone now for four nights. As he approached the building, he worried about Gregg until he saw lights in the windows which convinced him that, true to the telegram, Gregg had returned; then Billy felt more injured.

If Gregg's disappearance had happened suddenly, Billy would have consulted the police long before; but Gregg's going had been a gradual process. For several evenings — these were the ones when Gregg had been watching at Kilkerry's — he had stayed out late and had refused to discuss his doings with Billy when Bill had told him he had no right habitually to keep himself up so late in the night that he incapacitated himself for business the next day. When Gregg finally stayed away all night, Billy put that down as Gregg's obstinate and irritating way of replying to criticism; it angered Billy but did not really worry him, for he was

aware that Gregg rejoiced in a most extraordinarily hetrogeneous acquaintance and he supposed that one of Gregg's uncritical friends was putting him up. Later Billy did become worried; but he was feeling only indignation against Gregg and injury from him as he climbed the stairs and opened the door of his apartment.

"Hello, Bill!" said Gregg's voice instantly, cheerful as ever. "Get my wire?"

"Where in the world have you been?" Billy demanded, shutting the door behind him and staring into the living room at Gregg who had jumped up from his chair surrounded by cigarette smoke.

He asked that before having a good look at Gregg; for, as soon as he saw him, Billy emphatically amended with:

"What in the devil have you been doing?"

"Been in a fight," said Gregg, frankly and cheerily.

"And got the worst of it; that's plain."

"Oh, you haven't seen the other fellow, Bill. How's Mr. Hale now and the family — Marjorie, Bill?"

"All right," Billy replied quickly. "What took you to Freeport, Gregg?"

"Oh," said Gregg. "A freight train. Nothing's happened about Mr. Hale, then, since I've been gone?"

"No; Gregg, what have you been up to? Has it been about my affair, Gregg — I mean about Marjorie's father and ——"

Bill's indignation and criticism against Gregg suddenly broke in a flash-up of partial understanding of his friend as he stared into Gregg's eyes; and with this mingled Billy's misery about Marjorie.

"Old fellow," said Gregg, dropping his defense of banter, "I'll tell you what it was; I ran across Russell

the other night; to tell the truth, I heard where he might be and I got hold of him — I had a little trouble, you see — but I took him out of town and left him up near Freeport. It seemed better to get him out of the way."

And Gregg lightly sketched his combat with Russell and explained what he hoped would be the result.

Billy came to him and grasped his arm and felt over him with anxious affection to make sure that he really was as "all right" as he claimed to be.

"You shouldn't have tried anything like that, Gregg; Russell might have killed you. Then what good would it have done?"

"Well, he didn't," Gregg reminded, manifestly.

"No; but, Gregg — I hate to say it when you took all that trouble and might have got killed trying to help — but I can't see what good you've done. You say you've beaten up Russell, but really you've only shown him again that we're afraid of him — afraid to come out in the open, afraid to accuse and prosecute him for shooting Mr. Hale. You're just trying to do what Marjorie is — cover up and conceal; she thinks she can work out something that way. But she can't; she'll only get in deeper and deeper. I told her so to-night, Gregg; and she — she sent me away. I've quarreled with Marjorie; she told me to leave her house! Mrs. Hale invited me to dinner and Marjorie asked me to go; she didn't want me with her!"

With his hand still on Gregg's shoulder, he had forgotten Gregg's injury in new immersion in his own misery. And Gregg, too, forgot as he felt Billy's wretchedness. No one else could become so wretched as Bill and his bigness made it worse.

"What happened, old fellow?" Gregg questioned him, gently.

"She doesn't want me!"

"What does she want, Bill?"

"Rinderfeld!"

Gregg started, in spite of himself. "What did you say?"

Billy went back a little to explain. "She went to see Rinderfeld a couple of weeks ago, you know."

"You told me; so did he."

"I didn't want her to see him or have anything to do with him but I didn't dream that she could let that man attract her. I shouldn't say that, perhaps; a thing as low as Rinderfeld couldn't attract but he's fascinated her like a snake a bird; or he's hypnotized her. Ever since she's called on him, she's been telephoning him and doing what he tells her — no matter what, and quoting him to me. She lied direct to-day to Stanway because he told her to."

"Oh!" said Gregg. "Stanway was there to-day, was he?"

"That made our trouble."

"How?"

"She told him Mrs. Hale knew!"

"Wait!" pleaded Gregg. "Let's see! Stanway came there to see her mother, I suppose."

"Yes; and Marjorie got her mother out of the way, met him herself so she could lie to him, as Rinderfeld instructed her, and tell him her mother already knew so he wouldn't wait to tell her mother."

"Well, did he?"

"No. But ——"

"Good girl, Marjorie, I'd say. Bill, what would you have the girl do?"

"Do? Do?" stammered Bill, backing away. "Gregg, you haven't seen Marjorie, have you? You've no idea what Clearedge Street and Rinderfeld have done to her. She's not the same girl at all. But oh, my God, I love her so, Gregg; I love her so much more when she's in this frightful trouble which is doing things to her — things she can't realize at all. Why, Gregg, an hour ago when I tried to show her that what she'd done wasn't right, she answered me that right didn't make any difference; she said right was only the obvious thing to do, as if any one was a fool who did it."

Gregg stared from Billy down to the floor, and he was shaking from his constraint. Poor Bill, he felt; and poor, dear, dear little Marjorie, shut in there at home with the revelation of the flat on Clearedge Street behind her, with disgrace and scandal suspended on the thinnest of hairs above her, and having no one to help her through these weeks but Billy and Felix Rinderfeld, — Bill with his blunt, blind, utterly reckless morality and Rinderfeld with his comprehensions. No wonder she turned to Rinderfeld who offered her explanations, false and degraded, perhaps, but yet explanations. He gave her something for her mind to seize and accept or attack and supplied her with mental occupation at a time when she most desperately needed it, while Bill, of course, offered her feelings when she could but revolt at the stir of passion.

He, himself — Gregg — what had he to offer her? He did not know; but, whatever it was, he was going to offer it against Billy and — against Rinderfeld. He had never imagined Rinderfeld a contestant for Marjorie; and he recognized that Billy honestly did not consider Rinderfeld as a rival to him for Marjorie, because Billy could not put Rinderfeld on the same

plane with himself. But what Billy had told about Marjorie telephoning Rinderfeld and obeying him and quoting him suddenly gave Gregg a jerk of that alarming sensation known as "the creeps," which returned to him, in harder seizure later, when lost in one of those frank, picturesque, illuminating and self-informing pageants of hopes and fears which people call dreams.

In his room, Billy Whittaker lay awake long into that night, worried and utterly miserable. In his room, Gregg slept but dreamt horribly of Marjorie in a mire, — a black, steamy bog of fluid earth such as once, on a canoe trip into Canada, he saw suck down a frightened deer which had fled into it. His dream showed him Marjorie in that mire; it had caught her up to the shoulders; he could see her arms striking out as she attempted to swim. He could see her shoulders — her bare, white, lovely shoulders as they were that night of the Lovells' dance; and he knew that she was dressed, under the mire, in that new, beautiful, extreme dress her mother had bought for her and to which her father had objected in almost his last words before he left home for Clearedge Street. The black mire streaked her white shoulders but had not yet spattered her face; though it was up almost to her lips, he could see her face clearly and her hair arranged as it had been that night.

Now, in his dream, Gregg struggled to aid her; but he could not move for some one was holding him back. He fought and found that big arms clasped him and held him helpless; Russell's, they were; then they changed and became Bill's. And Bill overpowered him and pushed him away and picking up a scarf — that scarf which Marjorie had carried the night of the dance — he threw it over her shoulders; then, as Mar-

jorie cried out again, Rinderfeld appeared and, as she sank, she held her arms to him and — Gregg awoke.

It was one of those dreams so real that Gregg, after awaking, sat up, not sure that it had not happened; of course, he quickly realized; but the terror of it did not leave him. Was it — in its essential — to be true that Marjorie, sinking in the morass, could appeal as vainly to him as to Billy and that, before she went under, she must turn to Rinderfeld? It kept him awake quite a while; and, in the morning, added intensity to the business he had assigned to himself and which took him, a little before noon, to the hall of the building on Monroe Street where were the offices with which Sybil Russell was connected.

CHAPTER XIV

IT was a cool, sunny April morning — one of those perfect spring days when a steady, pleasant breeze blows from the lake, clearing away smoke and dust and lifting even the city heaviness from the atmosphere; a day of lightness and lilt, characteristic of spring in Chicago; and, of those who were entering the big office building from the walk, no one seemed to feel fuller response to the invigoration of the day than the woman whom Gregg at once recognized as Sybil Russell.

She came in from the street a few minutes after twelve. Her energy and aliveness were the first noticeable qualities of her; as Gregg had commented to himself on that night, when suddenly she confronted him after he had broken into her apartment on Clearedge Street, she seemed consciously to avoid playing up her physical attractions. Her regular features were almost handsome; her brown hair pleasing; her figure was good; but it evidently was her preference in business hours, as it had seemed to have been her choice that night at Clearedge Street, not to obtrude her body. She was dressed smartly in a blue, rather new, tailored suit with a small, smart blue sailor; a trim, new gray glove covered her slender, capable looking hand which clasped a medium-sized brown leather portfolio. She drew men's eyes; every one passing glanced at her; but no one's eyes dwelt upon her as men's eyes lingered on far less handsome and well-proportioned girls going in

and out the building. Almost all of them sought observation more than she. There was a dark-haired girl now contrasting with her; a stenographer, probably; in all likelihood, a "nice" girl and not nearly so good looking as Mrs. Russell but, in comparison with Sybil Russell, the other girl sought observation and, when she gained it, rewarded it without suggesting inward barriers to acquaintance. Even the man behind the cigar and candy counter opposite the elevators seemed able to imagine himself making progress with the dark-haired girl. But Sybil Russell was one whom the business men who passed her — lawyers, insurance agents and such — invariably noticed but as invariably put out of their minds because she showed, plainly, that she bore nothing for them.

She had not seen Gregg when she entered for it was evidently not the habit of her eyes to rove over men standing about, but during the moments while she waited for a descended car to empty, she half turned and suddenly recognized him. He saw her startle very slightly and then, when he believed she was not going to speak, she nodded to him.

He raised his hat and stepped forward. "How do you do, Mrs. Russell," he said, and instantly realized that she perceived he had come there to find her. She stepped back from the group entering the elevator.

"Do you want to talk with me?" she asked in a low, controlled voice.

"I'd like to," Gregg said.

"Where?"

He had expected no such directness as this and he admitted it. "I hadn't thought of that, Mrs. Russell."

"Do you want to come up to my office? We can talk in a private room."

"No, thanks."

He did not at all desire a talk of that sort; in a private room, secured for a private conversation, they must become stiff with each other — too self-conscious, at least; and self-consciousness breeds opposition. Gregg did not think this out but he felt it; and, having rejected her suggestion of her office, they had as alternative the hall or the sidewalk or a restaurant. That was the obvious resort for this hour, though it only now occurred to him, in spite of his having come here to look her up at noon. He had merely thought, "I'll probably find her at noon and have a chance to speak with her," without realizing, until he saw her, how many and difficult must be the words required.

"Couldn't we talk over a table?" he asked, in his pleasant way.

"Where do you mean?"

He discerned that she was testing him to see where he would take her, so he named the most thoroughly reputable hotel restaurant near-by.

"Yes, that's a good place," she agreed slowly, as though considering the restaurant; but of course he knew she was sizing him up as he was re-appraising her, checking his present impressions with those he had carried from that night on Clearedge Street.

Although it was more evident this noon that her years were few, if any, more than his, she held toward him the air of one older in experience or comprehension, at least. Partly that was defensive, he thought; but it was the only hint of the defensive in her manner. She was no nearer to accepting the status of a Magdalene than she had been that night; and she was as completely free now, as then, from that disgusting, slick assumption of superiority pretended to by the few indi-

viduals whom Gregg knew as boasted "free" lovers. Plainly she had a settled conviction that her code of conduct was her individual affair, which others had no right to question and which she had no impulse to preach to others.

"Let's go there, then," Gregg said. "I've been in a sort of smash-up, you see; but I hope it's not too noticeable."

"I think they'll let you in," she said. "Remember, I always pay my own check."

"All right," Gregg agreed, remembering that to pay for herself was one of her fetishes.

She went up to her office and while Gregg waited, he diverted himself with imagining the explosion if Bill dropped in and learned that he was going out to lunch with Mrs. Russell. To eat with any one implied with Bill a definite approval of that person; Bill liked to think almost ceremoniously, it seemed; phrases like the traditional "breaking of bread together" and the significance of "sharing salt" naturally occurred to Bill; never to Gregg. He had mixed with many sorts of people too much. Of course to go to lunch with Mrs. Russell vaguely meant to Gregg more than merely to talk with her in her office; but he was not now bothering about exactly what it did mean; for he was going to do it as the most effective means of serving Marjorie. When Mrs. Russell had asked him where he meant to go, he had named the thoroughly reputable LaSalle, where he naturally would take any of his friends, and where his acquaintance, of the best sort, might see him.

But Gregg gave the opinions of onlookers hardly a thought as, with Mrs. Russell, he entered the big, handsome hotel; he had no reason to, for no one could challenge, on her appearance or manner, the character of

the young woman who sat at the table opposite him. In her office, she had done the dozen little things, no one of which a man can discern but which all together freshen a woman and make her younger; and perhaps part of her transformation was that, when she sat down, she ceased the assumption that she was older than Gregg; but she did not depart a jot from her principle of independence.

"We will have two checks," she said to the waiter, as she took one of the menus and, without consulting Gregg, ordered chicken, cocoa and a salad. He ordered a chop and coffee, started to ask her, "That's all you really want?" but remembered in time and laid down the menu and smiled.

"How's business?" he asked her, as the waiter vanished.

"You have to go get it," she said. "But I'm ahead of last year, even on new business. How's yours?"

"Rotten, recently," Gregg admitted heartily. "I guess I'm not a go-getter."

"Your business is different from mine; when people feel insecure, they can be sold more insurance; but ice-machines require investment outlays that people are putting off just now."

Mr. Hale told her about me, Gregg thought; and the image of Marjorie's father having discussed with her Marjorie's friends — discussed Marjorie, likely, and his wife — gave Gregg an unwelcome reaction. Mrs. Russell observed it and immediately and with entire coolness informed him that she comprehended it.

"You will not have to tell me much about the persons concerned, Mr. Mowbry," she said, bringing him directly to the matter for which, she knew, he had sought her. "Nor about how they have been affected.

What your friend Rinderfeld has not mentioned to me, I may imagine from what I knew before of the family. Besides knowing something in general of Mrs. Hale, I saw her once in Field's with her husband; of course I saw their daughter that night at my apartment. I fully understand that Mrs. Hale does not share the disillusionment which has come to her daughter."

No mention of Marjorie by name; twice, indeed, deliberate avoidance of it; Gregg appreciated the tact of that though he said nothing, because she left him, at this moment, nothing to say. She had gazed directly at him while she had been speaking, but now she looked down in attention to drawing off her gloves; as she pulled them out smooth after she had them off and still pulled at them, Gregg watched, not her face, but her hands; for, though she herself was gazing at her hands, she was unconscious of them and of the sensation they betrayed. Long, well-shaped hands, she had, not soft-looking; hands of a determined character, faultlessly clean and well-kept without being over-manicured; hands capable of expressing restraint but just now off guard and warm and pink and pulsating. She could put passion in them and equally in the warmth of her grasp of another's hand or in the almost untouching softness of her caress; for now she ceased to pull at her gloves and, as she laid them on the cloth, she drew her hand away with her finger tips lingering on the soft suede.

Gregg looked up at her suddenly and much better understood her and much more fully comprehended what had happened. He found himself comparing her with the woman she had just mentioned, with the other woman who, at one time, had greatly attracted Charles Hale; and Gregg appreciated what this woman and

Mrs. Hale had in common, — self-constraint and reserve. Hale, himself, wanted these qualities; he was a man constantly expressing himself, enjoying feelings and liking to stir others to feelings; so a girl, such as his wife had been, must have come to him as a sort of challenge. She had been beautiful and constrained and reserved; and he had set himself to make her show feeling.

Thought Gregg, probably he — having so much feeling of his own — never imagined that a person could exist without as much; probably he was sure, when he married, he could kindle that cool, self-assured, reserved girl who, by her very constraint, allured him. But at last, thought Gregg, he found he could not. Gregg recollected the stiffness of Mrs. Hale's hand when in his own and he realized — as subconsciously he had understood before — that she had not been making her handclasp meaningless for him; it always was a meaningless formality with her — a rite of tactual sensation which she did not desire and which, probably, actually offended her.

Gregg could not imagine Sybil Russell making her handclasp meaningless, if she tried; she might express dislike of a person by it, as surely she could convey much feeling; but she could not keep sensation out of the contact; for she compressed passions below her exterior of reserve.

He pictured her standing in one aisle at Field's while, in another, or a little away in the same aisle, Mrs. Hale made her thoughtful, deliberate purchases with her husband at her side; and Gregg wondered whether Charles Hale saw Sybil Russell and, if he did, whether the two spoke.

"Of course it is the daughter," Mrs. Russell com-

mented quietly, gazing up at Gregg, "who is in the hard position. I've been thinking about her a good deal. I would have liked to go and talk to her, if that were possible. Of course it has not been. So that was why I was glad to see some one — besides your friend Rinderfeld — who has access to her."

"What has Rinderfeld told you about her?" Gregg asked too quickly.

Mrs. Russell made no betrayal motion of surprise but the intensity of her gaze at Gregg seemed suddenly to deepen.

"Nothing to me," she replied, quietly, "except that we must always remember that, although the daughter knows, she is as much to be protected from consequences as her mother — more to be protected, in fact; more."

The repetition and emphasis of that evidently was quotation from Rinderfeld; and the hearing of it sent hot blood through Gregg's veins. But he offered no comment.

"I presume that you, too, are more interested in protection of the daughter than of the mother," Mrs. Russell went on calmly. "For her, you came to see me."

"I am," Gregg admitted and gazed from her down at the table in silence for a moment. "Too," the word kept bothering him. Then he shook off this obsession about Rinderfeld and said:

"She's trying to salvage something from her home — that girl up in Evanston whom we're both thinking of — without a chance in the world to save much. Her home's gone; she surely realizes that; she wouldn't have it go on as before; she knows her father and mother must separate. But a man can't tell her to give up the hold she has on what's left until he can show

her something in its place. Whittaker, whom you've seen a little of" — Mrs. Russell flushed slightly — "seems to have been offering her a home of her own with him; but she hasn't been able to really consider that yet; otherwise, he hasn't suggested much beyond the smashing of what she has left and scandal and divorce and disgrace. Rinderfeld has been advising — I don't know exactly what yet, but in effect he's trying to preserve the *status quo*, at least temporarily. Of course, as a permanent proposition, that's impossible; and he knows it. I — I'm going up to see her to-night, Mrs. Russell; and I've got to bring her something besides flowers. You said you were glad to see me because I can go to her; what word did you want to send to her?"

"What did you come to me to ask me?"

"About her father," Gregg answered directly.

"What about him?"

"What happens to him — next?"

"You mean, will he be in danger again from George Russell?"

"You know what I mean."

"Yes; will he come back to me? Why don't you ask him that? Or, if she wants to know, let her ask him; her mother and she are taking him home now." Mrs. Russell glanced down quickly at the small, octagonal watch she wore on her wrist, "Yes; this is about the time; they probably have him home again with them now."

"I didn't know that," Gregg said quietly, not endeavoring to counteract her sudden bitterness. "But of course it makes no difference; his daughter can't ask him that. He's not the one to ask; you are, when the question's put a bit differently. Are you going to take

him back? Of course, he'll go to you. That night, I tried to stop him from going down to you. You see, I'd heard, and so I told him that probably he'd be shot, if he went. So I reckon he went to you a little more directly than if I hadn't spoken."

Gregg stopped; Hale hadn't told her that, he discerned, as he watched the tightening of her lips and the quick, half-clenching of her hands.

"When he was shot," Gregg went on, "that was another effort to prevent him doing what he wished; he will recover from that effort, and wish as before. What are you going to do?"

Sybil Russell kept her eyes steadily on Gregg's, and he had the extraordinary sensation that, by her eyes, she was trying to hold his from examining her; from witnessing the working of her lips, the prolonged holding and then the sudden inspiration of her breath lifting her bosom quickly and the pulse which visibly rattatted in her neck. A flush flowed over her face, vanished and resurged hot and red, and for the moment Gregg could not think of any one but of her who had given herself in marriage four years ago to one big, powerful, vital man, Russell, when he had been a soldier, finding — well, not what she had undoubtedly deluded herself to expect. But now, with another man, she had found it, and some one was asking if she would give it up.

"The word I wanted to send to his daughter, if it were possible for it to mean anything to her," Mrs. Russell said deliberately and with almost perfect control, "was that her father came to me because he loves me; I keep him for that and for no other reason."

She said "keep" without a loudening or describable change in her voice, but Gregg thought he had never

heard a word uttered with equal determination; she put in one breath "neither life nor angels nor principalities nor powers nor things present nor things to come nor height nor depth nor any other creature" should balk her; and it left Gregg nothing more to ask or to say. They talked when the waiter brought their luncheon and they ate, but neither returned to mention of the Hales; for Gregg had his answer and she had said what she had wished.

Arriving alone in his car at the Hales' that evening, Gregg did not go up the driveway as he had on the night of the dance; instead, he stopped at the curb a short way from the house and got out to walk up and down a minute before going in. He had flowers in a box under his arm and that, after all, seemed to him to form about the total of what he was bringing Marjorie; and he rebelled at going to her with no more upon an evening which, in some ways, must be the hardest in all her life.

Up there in her father's room was a light and beside it undoubtedly was her father in his bed, with her mother watching beside him, fond and solicitous and wholly unsuspicious. How strange, Gregg thought, that the house could appear identical to-night as upon other nights, that it could seem to any casual passer-by a secure home, when in reality it was rent from top to bottom; and not even the mistress of it knew.

Gregg stopped beside one of the big trees in the parkway between the walk and the avenue and was standing in the shadow from the nearest street lamp when a car approached and slowed and finally halted almost opposite the tree. It was a new, shining roadster with only the driver on the seat, and he turned to

the Hales' and leaned forward to have a better look at the lighted windows.

He had not noticed Gregg, who at first failed to make out the man's features; Gregg caught only his posture and said to himself, "Here's some one who knows something." Then Gregg's reactions ran on, "He knows that home's broken; he's come to see what he's to have out of the smash; he's not trying to take it now; he's willing to wait because he knows — by God, he's Rinderfeld!"

Gregg almost called that aloud; he was not sure he did not; he did move and betray his presence, for Rinderfeld's aquiline outline was gone; gears sounded, the motor moved off. And Gregg stood staring after him, the box of flowers on the grass.

"Rinderfeld!" he repeated in fright with himself and felt the return of that stark terror by which, in his dream, he had been helpless to move to save Marjorie from sinking in the mire. "Rinderfeld's waiting outside for her, to get her when we've fallen down at doing anything for her and her home's gone. Rinderfeld wants her!"

More than that, indeed, Gregg had caught in that flash of recognition of Rinderfeld's features in the rays of the arc light, but he could not say the whole of it even to himself; it was, "Rinderfeld knows how he will get her."

Gregg was watching the tail-light of Rinderfeld's car which turned the corner next and did not seem to pick up speed after completing the turn. Gregg received the idea that Rinderfeld was stopping around the corner and he was about to follow to ascertain the truth when he heard the front door of the Hale house open. A girl appeared in the oblong of light — Mar-

jorie! What a jump she gave Gregg suddenly showing herself like that! She was coming out alone and, evidently, secretly; he saw her look quickly behind her, as if to make sure she was not observed; then quietly she closed the door and hurried down to the walk.

CHAPTER XV

"MARJORIE!" Gregg called carefully and he stepped from the shadow.

She started back and, in the dim light, he saw that she was quivering, — she who had never known what it was to possess an unsteady nerve. She did not recognize him at once; she seemed slow even to put her mind to the process of recognition, so intent was she in her errand from the house. Then she said, with an audible expiration, "Oh, you're Gregg!"

This was something of relief; but he could not feel that she was glad to see him; he realized that at first she could not think about him personally at all but that she only debated whether he would interfere with her.

"Where're you going?" he asked, advancing.

"Not far; you've come to see me, Gregg?"

"Yes."

"I want to see you — after a while; I want awfully to see you. You've been away doing something for me, Billy said; he hasn't told me what. I've not seen him — just telephoned. We've had trouble, Gregg."

"I know," Gregg said; still he could not feel that she was really thinking about him; she seemed to be speaking to put him off so that she could proceed about her errand. He seemed to mean nothing to her at the moment when he longed to be everything to her and to put out of her mind everyone else and, most particularly, that man whom she was on her way to meet.

Here he had her again beside him. Marjorie! And, as always, she surprised in him a wilder impulse than he had expected to feel, wilder even than he had hoped he might feel. Hers, hers he was; whatever would help her, he would do. He had not known how she had been hurt; Bill, having seen the change come upon her day after day, could not have appreciated. "How they've hurt you!" Gregg agonized with himself. "My darling, how they've hurt you!" But his dry lips uttered only the words, "I know."

"Wait for me, please, Gregg," she asked him. "I'll be back in a few minutes; just wait outside, please; don't go into the house."

She had come out with a sleeved cape over her dress and without a hat; she looked littler than usual in that big, loose cape; she was littler, Gregg thought, the buoyancy gone from her and, in its place, fear! Not fear alone; she had taken on, too, a nobler quality which he could not describe, something he had never felt in her before and which was the surprise inflaming hotter his rills of blood.

"Rinderfeld was just here in his car; he stopped before the house," Gregg said. "You knew that?"

"Yes."

"You came out to see him?"

"Yes; I sent for him."

At last Gregg let himself touch her, grasping her arm under the clumsy cape.

"I'll go with you to him. I think he's around the corner."

She looked up at him, but not yet was she thinking about him but of how he could aid her purpose. "Come to the door with me first," she asked. "Speak to mother and tell her we're going out together."

He acceded and went with her into the house. "Mother!" Marjorie called.

Gregg stood just inside the door gazing at her under the hall light which showed him pitilessly the change in this Marjorie from her who, a little time ago, kissed her father fondly here when he started "to St. Louis" and who so gaily and lightly set out between Bill and himself for the Lovells' dance. Her face was thinner; no doubt of it; her skin paler; she needed now a lipstick but she had not used one. Not beautiful as that other Marjorie, this girl; yet Gregg, even if he could have had that other girl back, would not have exchanged her for this Marjorie with strange, constant tension at the corners of her mouth, with her blue eyes bigger and brighter with unceasing, nervous excitement.

Her mother came down, and how little was she changed; emerging from her husband's room, she was calm and composed as ever; over her dress she wore an apron, — a perfectly fitted, linen apron with a tiny red cross embroidered in silk, undoubtedly one of the aprons she wore when managing a room of women rolling bandages during the war. It was the chief sign by which she showed that something had happened; but on sight of Marjorie, she stirred to uneasiness about her daughter and she was almost demonstrative in her greeting of Gregg.

"I'm very glad you came to-night, especially since Billy is not here," she said, giving her cool, formal hand. "Mr. Hale is very much better; he really has been in no danger for several days; but I am beginning to be worried over Marjorie. I've never seen a child feel a parent's illness so; of course she adores her father and the sudden discovery of his serious condition was an unusual shock. But now she should realize

his danger is over; and she must go out more among people."

When Gregg said he was taking her for a walk, Mrs. Hale urged him to do it.

Around the corner, they found Rinderfeld's car with hood lifted and with Rinderfeld on the curb and leaning over the motor, wrench in hand, as though making an adjustment. He glanced about when they approached but again addressed himself to the motor until they left the walk and crossed the grass strip to him; then he straightened and turned as though they might be strangers stopping curiously or to offer him advice.

"Mowbry?" he questioned in a low voice.

"Yes," said Gregg.

"What has happened?" Rinderfeld immediately questioned Marjorie.

Gregg drew back a step and it was Rinderfeld who detained him. "There's no need of Mowbry going, is there?" he quickly asked Marjorie.

"No," she said, but it was plain to Gregg that she was scarcely thinking about him.

"Stay, please," Rinderfeld requested. "She telephoned me less than an hour ago; obviously I would not have chosen these circumstances for a conference; but she said it was necessary now. What is it that has happened?" he asked Marjorie again, turning to her.

"Father's home!" she uttered in a whisper.

"Yes; of course," Rinderfeld replied instantly and, it seemed even to Gregg, with deliberate chilliness. "I know that."

"Mr. Rinderfeld, I can't bear it! He's back in his room with mother reading beside him as though nothing had happened — nothing had happened ——"

"Stop!" said Rinderfeld with amazing force in his scarcely audible voice. "That is all you sent for me for?"

"All?" Marjorie gasped.

"Whenever anything occurs which I may not know, please inform me at once; if necessary, send for me. When what is happening is merely in accordance with my direction," Rinderfeld continued in his cold tone, yet with a flourish, "do me the honor, please, to believe that I have taken into account the contingencies. He, as you say, is again home; but he is still a sick man; one or the other of my nurses is constantly in attendance and will remain until, a week from to-morrow, you and your mother leave Chicago for New York on your way to Europe."

He turned about, with a gesture of the dramatic, and lowered the hood of his car, flung his wrench into the tool box on the running board, and opened the door to his seat.

"I'm not going to Europe next week nor any other time, Mr. Rinderfeld!" Marjorie whispered in protest to him, grasping his sleeve as he started to get into his car.

"No?" he rejoined, freeing himself from her quietly. "You understand that, when I have to object to your suggestions, it is not for regard for my own convenience but your own protection. Good night," he said to her, starting his engine. Then, when he had the car going, "Good night, Mowbry."

Gregg returned the parting word, the first he had spoken — the first, indeed, which he had had opportunity to speak — since he acknowledged Rinderfeld's recognition of him. What would have passed between Marjorie and Rinderfeld, if he had not been present,

Gregg wondered; what would have been said, if he had not surprised Rinderfeld in that off-guard moment before the Hales' home? "Smooth!" Gregg said to himself. "The smoothest proposition I ever saw. He has her coming to him; he's going to keep her coming to him! Europe! He knows she's not going to Europe; but she thinks he wants to send her away; thinks he doesn't want to see her, except when necessary on business. And he's all her affairs right in his hand — well, that was my big idea; I got him for her because I knew he was the smoothest proposition in Chicago."

He looked down at Marjorie who, thus deserted by Rinderfeld, seemed at a loss what to do.

"You want to go home?" Gregg asked her, expressionlessly.

"No."

"You really want to walk?"

"Please!"

He hesitated and then he clasped her arm as they started.

"You've no idea what a relief it is to have you come, Gregg," she said, as though just now able to appreciate his arrival. "Being with other people is like — well, suppose you and Billy and I had been to the war a few years ago and come back to people who hadn't heard of it and didn't even know anything had happened. That's what being with other people is like for me these days, Gregg. I can't talk to them about anything which seems real or get anything from them which means a snap of fingers to me."

Her voice wavered up and down in her difficulty of controlling it; and he noticed now how it had altered in quality, too; more of the woman's voice than Marjorie's ought to be; and the wretchedness in it struck

him weak and ashamed of taking offense for having felt himself ignored by her.

"I'd have come long ago, Marjorie, if I'd had any idea you'd have any use for me."

"Perhaps you couldn't have helped, Gregg. Billy didn't. Oh, he's been perfectly fine to me! He's tried to help me in his best way; but he has the most prodigious principles. And having principles, Gregg, isn't much help in a fix like mine. I suppose, if you have them, you're bound to apply them, yet you can't — to more than one thing at a time. They simply won't work with each other."

"I'm glad I haven't any then," Gregg said, attempting to laugh.

She attempted it too; but failed and, as they walked on and he kept his clasp of her, he felt her shivering, though, under her cape, she could not be cold. It was barely cool that night; for since the evening that Billy and Gregg had driven from Chicago on a snow-covered road, spring had established itself; and with darkness, even the brisk, April breeze which during the day had blown from the lake, had given way to a warm, limpid wind from the west, smelling of the damp, fresh-ploughed loam of the farmlands and of green budding bush and tree. That damp odor in the air suddenly returned Gregg in feeling to the freight car in which he had fought Russell; then his thought jumped to Mrs. Russell, and he wondered how two women, dwelling not seven miles apart and not seven years separated in years, could take a fact of life as differently as this girl quivering beside him and she who so coolly and steadily had sat opposite him at lunch and asserted her "what I have, I hold."

He let go Marjorie's arm and felt for his cigarette

case. He hesitated as he drew it from his pocket and then asked, gazing down at her, "Want one of these?"

"What?" she said, as though not understanding what he could be doing. "I?" She repeated, "I?"

He dropped the cigarette case back into his pocket, wondering if she positively had forgotten the Marjorie who, a couple of weeks ago, had amused herself by shocking Bill with her white shoulders and her cigarettes; but her mind, too, was on that girl.

"It's queer how you come to like things that happen to you, isn't it, Gregg?" she asked suddenly. "Last week it seemed I would give everything I had to be back where I was before the Lovells' dance. Now I wouldn't be back there, even if I could. I wouldn't be ignorant of what was; would you?"

"Not now," said Gregg, watching her face as they came into the light of a street lamp.

"But you tried your hardest to keep it from me."

"Probably I would again."

"That's not very consistent."

"Can you be consistent, Marjorie?"

"No, of course not. I never dreamed until I got into this that there could be an affair in which you simply couldn't figure out the right and wrong. But back there at home is my father, who's committed what people call the unforgivable sin; and there in his room near mine, Gregg — his room where I used to run in the mornings from my bed when I was a little girl and jump into bed with him — there's my father, the best and finest man I ever knew. And he is a fine man, generous, kind and considerate of everybody and honorable — in every possible respect but one. Oh, I loved him so! And mother cares for him and admires him so much now because he's been a great and useful

man in the world and will keep on being so — if I don't disgrace him or let others ruin him."

What a distortion of this girl's wrestle with herself to say that she was not trying to do right, Gregg thought.

"Here we were, Gregg, just about ideally happy, any one would say," she went on. "Life seemed a perfectly plain, pleasant matter for us; we were all well and normal; father was doing wonderfully well in business; he was coming along awfully fast and making lots of friends; everybody was talking about him and saying he could do anything and go anywhere! Mother was accomplishing what she liked and was making friends and everybody said what a wonderful woman she was. Why, if I'd been a boy, I'd have been sure the way to make my life a success was to follow in father's footsteps; being a girl, I supposed my mother's ways were just about right. I hadn't meant to follow her particular tastes, of course; I had my own; but I had meant to become a woman — a wife — in much the way she had. Why she — he — we three seemed to have absolutely everything; and then came that telephone call — and it's gone, Gregg; it's all gone, just like that."

"All what?" demanded Gregg.

"Your confidence in the ideals you'd held before you and which you came to suppose were the biggest and most attractive in life; for another sort of attraction has beaten them. Of course, I'd heard about that. I'd read newspapers full of how men, who had everything, ruined themselves for it; but I always believed there was something held back in those stories and something not told about the men. Anyway, I never dreamed it could appeal to a man like my father. I simply

couldn't imagine him setting that above everything else; and now that I've seen it with my own eyes, I understand it less than ever. It seems so actually impossible for my father to put that woman we found in that flat above honor and decency and mother — and me and every one else, Gregg. But he has!"

"No, he hasn't!" Gregg denied so suddenly that his voice was louder than he intended; and he looked about in alarm to see if he had been heard by people passing on the other side of the street. Marjorie looked too and, though they gave no sign, she asked in a whisper which was almost a gasp, "How hasn't he?"

Gregg gazed down at her and she, glancing up and seeing his face, cried in a whisper, "You look at me like Mr. Rinderfeld when he said I couldn't know about father because no man has ever told me so much as half the truth about — men!" And Gregg, in that flash, caught the power of Rinderfeld over her; he realized that, while Billy had been trying to lead her back through the break in the barrier about the tree of knowledge, Rinderfeld, finding her within it, had set himself to guide her in the way she was bound to go, with him or without. For return to innocence is, of course, impossible; no longer was she to be satisfied with pretty fictions and child's tales of what lay within the wall; she had seen something of it for herself; and if, when she demanded understanding, her friends merely told her to bind up her eyes and forget, why they simply played her into Rinderfeld's hand.

"The half of the truth about men which you don't know, Marjorie," Gregg said, as they both halted, staring at each other, "isn't what men do; you know, every woman knows what men do; the half you don't realize is how little we think of it. You've just shown

this when you claimed that your father, in doing what he did, put Mrs. Russell above every one and everything else. You think that because a woman — most any woman — to do it, would have to take the point of view you've expressed. A man doesn't. Good God, Marjorie, I'm not going to be any use to you putting up a bluff about things. I've seriously considered going in for that sort of thing — whether I have or not. Every man I know either has gone in for it or at least has considered the pros and cons of it. You don't know a girl who ever has even thought about it the same way or who ever could; for it's an overwhelming matter to your sort of girl, make or break to her character; likely enough it's life or death for her. But it's not to a man if he goes in for it; it's not even the biggest thing in his life, if he's much of a man, as your father was! It's just something else in his life, along with all the other things in it. That's all Clearedge Street meant to him. And he never set Mrs. Russell in his mind above your mother and you."

"How frightful!" Marjorie breathed. "How much, much more awful!" And she started to walk again, more rapidly and nervously than before. He accompanied her, of course, and, not consciously choosing direction but merely following the street, they came to the lake near the campus of Northwestern University and proceeded along the path in the campus and by the edge of the bluff above the water and the little strip of sandy shore. It was darker there, away from the street lamps and, though now and then a couple from the University passed them, mostly they were alone with the big, black trees and looming buildings of Northwestern on their left and on their right the lake, limitless and black too, except for the glint of reflected stars

and the yellow and red reflections of far-away masthead and side lanterns.

"The three of us are separated forever, I know — papa and mamma and I," Marjorie suddenly ended the long silence in which she had walked beside Gregg almost as in a dream. "My family, we've come to the end of that. There's no use for any one to figure how we can keep together; the best any one can do is help us to go apart and each of us keep something — something of what we used to think of each other and feel back there in that house on — on birthdays, Christmases — most every day, Gregg! It seemed so perfect and so happy! It was happy, Gregg! Father was happy! He couldn't have made me so happy without being happy himself! And he didn't lack anything! He couldn't have wanted anything else!"

Gregg clutched her arm and held it tight as he felt her convulse in her effort for self-control. He did not try to answer her; reply would be surplusage when her father so certainly had wanted and gone out to gain something else. She had stopped and he stood with her in the dark of the path and patted her gently as she felt in her cape pocket for a handkerchief and wiped her eyes.

"I'm sorry, Gregg," she apologized.

"Don't say a word of that to me!" he forbade her with queer gruffness in his voice. "You've been wonderful, Marjorie. No one like you ever in the world. Oh, my God, I wish I could do something."

"No one can, Gregg. What a humpty-dumpty thing honor is; and love and — what holds a family together! It's up there on the wall and you think it solid and safe as the wall; then something tips it; and

all the king's horses and all the king's men can't do a thing for you."

She turned and as she gazed to the south down the long, dark stretch of the lake toward Chicago, she was caught by the mighty, yellow night aurora spread across the southern sky over the city; it always is there, of course, but upon certain nights it glows brighter and seems so tremendous that you think it can not be the mere irradiation of millions of man-kindled lights; it appears too fundamental, too spontaneous and uncompelled. This was such a night, and the sight of it struck Marjorie almost with awe for the city which cast this aura.

"One family isn't very much, is it?" she said slowly, "when you see that. But we can't help being awfully important to ourselves."

"You're important to everybody," Gregg assented quickly.

"Yes, maybe. Our trouble means another broken family; and the family, they say, is the unit of civilization. Break up families and where would any one be? Where would that be?" She stared at the glow. Gregg hesitated and then decided to object.

"That's mostly smashed families, Marjorie; at least, families that aren't what they used to be. There I go; and whenever anybody else carries on like that, I mention the remark they say Lincoln made; or maybe it was George Washington — or George Cohan. Anyway, it was in answer to the lamentation that "I'm afraid Bill Brown ain't the man he used to be!" "No," said George, "and I'm afraid he never was." I guess that if families aren't now what they used to be, the chief trouble is that they never were. We're all working out something there, Marjorie, I guess."

"Something right?"

"Right?" said Gregg, almost impatiently. "What in the devil is right?" He did not reply to himself for a moment; he had turned away from the glow of the city; glancing toward the university buildings, he found that they had come opposite the dormitories where lighted windows proclaimed the rooms where boys were studying or gathered in groups, talking. "There's where they're bickering about what constitutes right — between friendly little arguments on the prize fight and baseball schedule," Gregg said. "Anyway, that's the way we used to do in the Phi Kap house of the U. of M. Only it's a little early in the evening now; about midnight, when you're lying about in some other fellow's room, is when you really get worked up about philosophy and such. There's usually a theoretical Buddhist in the bunch and, before the war, you could count upon at least one German rationalist; then of course there was Bill with good sound ideas — we'd have a pretty competent discussion winding up, usually, with a rather general feeling that there wasn't much right — absolute right, I believe the professor's word was — but that what was the greatest good for the greatest number was right; and if that wasn't right, there wasn't any use bucking it; for it was going to happen. So cities are all right, Marjorie; they have to be; they're happening everywhere. And the way we're beginning to live in them must be right, for we're most of us coming to live that way. But I know a little how you feel; I felt some of it myself that night down at Clearedge Street.

"It seemed to me for a while that everything about there was rotten — married people and all, Marjorie; it seemed to me they were all rotters and quitters and

dodgers, any amount lower and less worth while than — well people who lived in Evanston or Muskegon and the old-fashioned parts we know. Then I came to."

"To what, Gregg?"

"That they're working out things down there — especially in relations between men and women — on a little better and sounder basis, after all, than in most other places. Don't bother about the bright lights down there, Marjorie; they're all right in general."

"You mean the people down there are right?"

"In general."

"You don't mean Mrs. Russell's right, I hope."

"In more ways than she's wrong. Now wait a minute, Marjorie. You've seen that your father has other qualities besides the one he's weak in. Mrs. Russell's got other qualities, too. She ——"

"I want to know nothing about her!"

"You have to know about her," Gregg said quietly. "For you're not through with Mrs. Russell; she's only begun to do things to you which she'll keep on doing to you until you understand her. You said you used to believe the best thing you could do was to become a wife in the way your mother had; that meant, you thought your mother was right. Do you think so now?"

Marjorie gasped. "Why, what wrong's she done, Gregg?"

"I didn't say she'd done wrong; but without doing wrong, you can *be* wrong, Marjorie; and it certainly looks as if she's been wrong in at least some of the things in which Mrs. Russell's been right."

"What?"

"Well, for one, Mrs. Russell works. That flat down

there, you ought to know, wasn't entirely paid for by your father. Mrs. Russell supports herself."

"Do you mean my mother ought to have worked? Why, it would have been so absurd, it was so unnecessary."

"To buy bread for the family, yes; but not for other reasons. You simply can't ignore Mrs. Russell, Marjorie; for she not only took away your father but she has no idea of giving him up; she's going to use everything she has to hold him."

"How do you know?"

"She told me so to-day in plain English."

"What? You talked with her, about father, to-day?"

"Yes; we had lunch together."

"What?"

Gregg repeated it; but Marjorie seemed yet unable to believe. "You and she!"

"Yes," said Gregg.

For an instant she stood stark, staring up at him in the dark; then, without a word, she turned from him and started down the path they had walked together. For a few moments, he watched after and then he followed, slowly overtaking her but never coming quite beside her until they reached the walk at the end of the path; then side by side but without a word, they continued to her home.

How he had bungled it, Gregg accused himself in his dismay, as he realized he had spent his chance with her and had failed her — failed, in his way, as abjectly as Billy had failed in his, and by what he had done and said shut himself off from power further to influence her as finally as Billy had.

Reaching the house, Gregg followed Marjorie upon

the porch where, at the door, she turned and spoke to him, at last. "Good night, Gregg," she said quietly, without offering her hand.

He was shaking now and his lips trembled so that he had to make an effort to speak. "I'm going in with you," he said and himself turned the knob and opened the door.

When she preceded him into the hall, he witnessed a spasmodic tightening of tension in her which caught him up with more piteous yearning to serve her. She scarcely seemed conscious of what she was doing. It had become so much of a habit for her, immediately upon entering her home, to strain every sense in apprehension of what might have happened during her absence.

Very gently Gregg took her cape from her; he dropped his own overcoat. "Come in here." He led her into the drawing-room, which was empty but lighted, and at the farther end of which a fire was burning on the hearth. There was a lounge before the fire and Marjorie, taken to it, sat down; but Gregg remained standing.

"You said to Rinderfeld you're not going to Europe with your mother; what do you mean to do?"

She refused him answer; so he demanded, "You'll stay here with your father?"

She looked up at that. "No."

"Why not?"

"I was here with father when he found — Clearedge Street." And she turned from him and from the fire also and stared off.

"Where are you going?" he asked and, still, refused answer, repeated it twice. Then he said:

"You can keep from telling me but you can't keep

whatever you do from affecting my life more than anything else that could happen. Of course, you know you own Bill, too. There's a lot of girls that are pleasant and good-looking who can do whatever they want without stirring other people much; but you're not one of them. You're a girl that a man, whoever's had a chance to know you, can never forget. Who will know where you are? Bill?"

"No."

"Your father?"

"No."

"Who? You can't drop entirely out, you know; that is, I don't think you want to be out of reach if ——"

"No," she said again, and this time interrupting him.

"Who will have your address?"

"Mr. Rinderfeld's office."

That shot a start through Gregg, although, in a certain sense, he should have expected it; yet it confused him so that he almost aggravated his bungling of a few minutes ago by speaking of Rinderfeld; but he saved himself from that.

"Thank you," he said; then, "Good night." And he departed.

CHAPTER XVI

MARJORIE set out for Clearedge Street before nine the next morning and, determined to make this expedition wholly as a free agent, she left home on foot and took the elevated train cityward from Evanston. For five or six miles she gazed from the car window down upon pleasant, rectangular back yards with fresh, green grass and occasional spots of yellow crocus and with budding lilac and bridal wreath bushes set against the rear and sides of seven and eight and nine-room houses of brick and frame and stucco, with garages associated; and now and then there came into sight larger, and usually older, dwellings of ten or twelve rooms, with wider lawns and gardens.

Red and yellow and dun flat buildings loomed here and there; even in Evanston were blocks of apartments, but the flat did not prevail. Most of the Evanston apartments, and most of those in the northern fringe of Chicago, were of six rooms or larger, and they offered sufficient space physically to permit, if they could not be said to foster, an approximation of the "home" life which Marjorie considered normal. But soon, not only the green back yards and the lilac-girt houses disappeared, but also the six-room, six-flat semi-detached structures ran into solid blocks of smaller, residential suites side by side in uniform strata. What back yards these buildings boasted were preëmpted by newly washed sheets, pillow cases and underwear and stockings flapping in the April breeze; for though the

day was Thursday, these people honored the tradition of Monday wash day more in the breach than in the observance; and necessarily, as they were obliged to take turns — or paid persons for them took their turns — at the washtubs in the basements above which, seriatim, they dwelt.

"Wilson Avenue!" the guard called when the train next slowed and, in a minute, Marjorie was down on the street in the midst of the most ultra-modern and challenging, the most ominous or the most hopeful — according to your point of view — but at any rate, by far the most prophetic section of Chicago, and that one with which Marjorie Hale, by her birth and upbringing, was least equipped to cope.

Almost within her own memory — and well within the clear recollection of her mother — Wilson Avenue was a country road with patches of woods and wide, meadowy vacant lots, swampy in wet weather, where violets and strawberries, "cat-tails" and black-eyed Susans grew wild on the edges of the grass lawns surrounding the first, suburban homes of Sheridan Park. The old steam branch of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad — a twelve-mile spur from the Chicago Union Station to Evanston — had small occasion to halt its commutation trains there. Neighboring to the south, and cityward, was the little suburban settlement of Buena Park, where the children of Eugene Field's verse were growing up and girding themselves for their redoubtable defense of the Waller lot. Old American families lived here, and where the trains stopped at Argyle Park and Edgewater, a few miles further out from the city and where Corinna Winfield had lived before she married Charles Hale, were other families of Massachusetts, Connecticut and New York

State upbringing and tradition and, particularly, from such old Puritan towns as Salem. The impulse of the pioneer as well as the blood of the Puritan descended to them who built their separated, independent homes and preferred few neighbors and feared not the coming of children. In one house the caller would see the sword of a Sheridan cavalryman in its sheath on the wall; in the next, where the father had been too young to have ridden in the Shenandoah, the Harvard oar which he had pulled against Yale hung over the hall mantel. These people thought in terms of American families of English descent in Chicago and Boston and New York; it was the age when Mrs. Potter Palmer reigned in Chicago society and when to be received at the castellated Palmer mansion on Lake Shore Drive was the proof of position; when the Chicago newspapers boasted of triumphant marriages of Chicago girls to English noblemen and heralded that the leader of Chicago society was received at the English court and was entertained at English castles. This all supplied to girls like Corinna Winfield, on the fringe of Chicago "society," a perfectly definite and orderly scheme of social advancement, starting from where you were and progressing through acquaintanceship with older and more established families here, through older families in Newport and New York and on to England. She was simply following this scheme when she married Charles Hale, a young man not of superior social position but certain to be more successful than her own father and certain to be able, with her, to win higher place; and this was the scheme of life which consciously, or subconsciously, underlay every effort in Marjorie's upbringing and in accordance with which Corinna Hale had moved the family to Evanston. For,

from her point of view, which she also made Marjorie's, the old section of suburban homes north and south of Wilson Avenue was being "ruined."

The trouble was that the immigrants crowding Chicago — the Italians, Bohemians, Swedes and Danes, Germans, Ruthenians, Croatians, Poles, Magyar, Irish, French, Jews — the vigorous, vital, enterprising peoples who a generation ago supplied you with servants, laborers, bootblacks and tradesmen and who kept themselves conveniently and picturesquely in foreign colonies, "slums" and ghettos, were forgetting their proper "place." For their children were growing up; and these new Americans felt small need for the old-world associations to which their fathers, feeling themselves at a disadvantage in a strange land, had clung, comforted by the sound of their native speech and encouraged by papers printed in the old language. These were the children who had learned American in the public schools and, for the most part, refused to speak their fathers' tongue; eagerly they fitted themselves for and boldly entered trades, businesses and professions never aspired to by their fathers; they succeeded, mixed again and met and married outside their own race and struck out for the American community which lay along the lake north of the city.

To accommodate them, an elevated railroad, with electric trains running at intervals of minutes, paralleled the rusty rails of the old suburban spur and, instead of slighting Wilson Avenue, it made a terminal in a meadow there; and upon the old American families, each in its separate home at intervals along the oak-wooded shore, the Chicago melting-pot began to pour. To the end of those elevated rails also traveled boys and girls and husbands and wives come to Chicago

from Frankfort, Manistee and a hundred other little towns up the Michigan shore; from Lafayette, De Kalb, Ottumwa, Lincoln and LaCrosse and the thousand other little cities and villages of the surrounding States. These may actually predominate in the present population of Wilson Avenue but, in so far as their tradition is that of the American pioneer in his isolated, independent home, dark and quiet at an early hour of night, they have exchanged it for the more delightful customs of the new Americans, bred in the city, whose inherited instinct is a composite not of Anglo-Saxon frontier rigors but of continental reflexes brought from centuries lived in European walled towns. They built up the modern Wilson Avenue, — and by "Wilson Avenue" the Chicagoan means a wide district north and south, which the actual avenue bisects from the lake west, — making it the exaltation, not of the kitchen and the sitting room, but of the inn and the street; not of the sewing room and the meetinghouse, but of the shop and the theater.

Marjorie Hale could thrill to the gayness, the lilt and *élan* of such life when she met it in Paris on the Rue de Rivoli and the Boulevard des Italiens, in Brussels on Boulevard Adolph Max and when she found it in Milan, in Prague and Rome. The "continental" abroad pleased and exhilarated her; but here in Chicago, where people were so aptly learning the art of living in a city, it offended her; for her Chicago should be a sort of transplanted New England and these people, seizing on a section which satisfactorily had been progressing before, were transforming it into new almost-anything-else. They disregarded all her conceptions of social advancement; they not only failed to understand the scheme to which she had been born,

but they seemed even to be unaware of its existence in their absorption in ends and aims of their own toward which they were striving by rules they were making for themselves.

Of course, Marjorie did not think this out; it reached her through feelings as she responded, in spite of herself, to the allure and exuberance of the smart display in the shop windows, to the enlivenment of a splendid theater front and the luxuriance of a tea room which would have been the envy of her Rumpelmeyer's of the Rue de Rivoli. They all were new as, in that neighborhood where twenty-five years have heaped values of millions upon the meadows of violets and black-eyed Susans, everything is to-day's and to-morrow's creation. Nothing which was conspicuous either obviously possessed a past or — by imitation of old architecture — brooded on the past of other places. The people apparently brooded not at all on their pasts, whatever they might have been.

It was morning, and though these streets are not at their best early in the day, Marjorie was sensitive to the animation of the people passing her; and she was particularly unwilling to feel energized by them, especially by the girls and the women from nowhere that she knew and headed to nothing that she could discern. But too undeniably they possessed something which she and her own friends, who fitted into her scheme of things, had not; they displayed positive qualities which — to their minds, at least — not only compensated for whatever lacks she might find but which endowed them with a sensation of a certain advantage of her, as they noticed her. It irritated Marjorie that they recognized her instantly as different from themselves and, by a glance, could set her

apart from them, — and not above them; not obviously below them, either. They seemed to Marjorie — these girls, living in flats and hotels and rented rooms, in restaurants and cafeterias, many of whom were on their way to work — to strike a sort of balance in their valuations of Marjorie and themselves, conceding to her traits they had not and conscious of their possession of an attribute she wanted.

She could not define it, but it was something freer, certainly, and something which engendered confidence; Marjorie felt she had never been in the atmosphere of such aggressive confidence. It was in her attempt to reassert her own superiority that she thought again, definitely, of Mrs. Russell and reminded herself that it was on a street a little farther along that Mrs. Russell lived. It was not until the instant later that Marjorie aggregated with this the fact that her father also had been involved there.

She turned to Clearedge Street and as she neared Mrs. Russell's number, she felt her feet and her hands become light and unsteady in her excitement; she could not think now what she was doing or recall even the exact details of the procedure she had planned during the night. Though she was on the odd-number side of the street, she crossed over to the opposite walk to look up at the third-floor apartment. A woman, or some one, was behind the curtains, Marjorie was sure, as she abruptly recrossed the street and entered the vestibule where Billy and she had rung and waited so long.

White daylight was now illuminating the cream and pale-green tiling and the glass-paneled inner door with the pale-green curtain at which she had stared under the yellow glow of the electric bulb that night. There

was the row of three brass-lipped letter boxes with the buttons beside them, with the cards of the tenants of the first and second floor and, on top, the card with the name of Mrs. Russell. The sight made Marjorie sicken, but she pressed the third button.

Almost immediately — in contrast with that night — the buzzer at the lock announced that the catch was being released and she pushed open the door and climbed the stairs up which Billy and Gregg and she had run. But her sensations now suddenly jumped from repeating her terrors of that night; and she thought of her father treading this stair carpet on previous occasions, sometimes with Mrs. Russell beside him — doubtless — and sometimes arriving alone; and her mind attacked wretched details such as whether he carried a key to the door below and to that ahead or whether he had always rung to be admitted.

The door at the top swung back when Marjorie reached the third floor and, catching breath as she looked in, she confronted a large, competent-looking matron of gray-haired fifty.

"Come in!" this woman instantly invited and Marjorie entered and let the matron close the door. Marjorie glanced toward the bedroom where her father had been carried after he was shot; for a moment she was in the grip of her emotions when she found him there unconscious and apparently dying; then they let go of her and her mind, without bidding, jumped again.

"Who are you?" she demanded of the woman.

"Who did you come to see?" the matron returned. There was almost nothing distinctive about her; just woman, about a hundred and sixty pounds in a brown, "stout" size, ready-made suit; broad sensible shoes; big hands, clean but marked by work. Her face was

commonplace, except for a little more set to her mouth than ordinary and a bit of glint of I'm-used-to-relying-on-myself in her gray eyes. On second glance, those eyes did not seem to Marjorie to accord with the rest of her at all.

"Is Mrs. Russell here?" Marjorie asked her.

"No; who shall I say called?"

"Mrs. Russell still lives here?"

"Yes."

"Then I'll come back," Marjorie announced, staring about. There was the desk in which she had discovered her father's picture and the letters from him; she could breathe the close air here no longer. She flung back the entrance door and stepped out, the woman making not the slightest objection.

Not until she was again on the street and had fled some distance away from that building did Marjorie connect her impressions of the woman sufficiently to become convinced that the matron was no mere friend of Mrs. Russell's nor co-tenant nor was she in the apartment on any ordinary employment. She was a sort of sentinel, Marjorie was sure, waiting for some one not a girl like Marjorie Hale.

Looking up, she noticed a sign on the front of a six-flat building — or a structure which originally must have been six-apartments — which proclaimed:

"Rooms to rent; also rooms with bath and kitchenette."

Marjorie halted and then started up the short walk toward the entrance, but the effect of her call at Mrs. Russell's was too strong upon her; she merely noted the number on Clearedge and went on. Farther along were similar signs, and the streets crossing Clearedge and parallel to it supplied her a dozen addresses. The

second step of her purpose for this morning should lead her directly into one of these apartments, but she welcomed the sight of a real-estate agent's sign to give her excuse for delay.

It was a large, square office room which she entered, with a cashier's cage on one side near the gold-lettered plate-glass window, and on the other, behind a counter, a row of desks with men seated before them, each desk bearing a little brass standard displaying a "Mr." somebody-or-other. From the second desk, a light-haired, thin-featured man of about twenty-five — presumably "Mr. Dantwill" — arose languidly and, slightly adjusting his bow tie in his soft collar while he looked over Marjorie, he advanced to the counter.

"Room to rent?" he repeated after her question, evidently desiring a moment's more time to estimate the purposes of this applicant. "We do not list rooms to rent; but we have buildings with single-room apartments."

"What's the difference between a room and a single-room apartment?" inquired Marjorie, unexpectedly amused.

Mr. Dantwill's calm, pale blue eyes continued to regard her serenely. "Single-room apartments run from sixteen dollars weekly up."

"Up?" said Marjorie, ceasing to smile. "How far, please?"

"I guess we can accommodate you," Mr. Dantwill rejoined with composure, "any distance."

Marjorie laughed and glanced at her list of addresses. "Would you be good enough to give me some idea as to whether these are rooms, please, or single-room apartments?"

He took her memorandum. "You seem to have listed

rooms, chiefly," he announced and smiled, evidently feeling a smile was indicated; with equal willingness to fit his expression to an occasion, he would have groaned, Marjorie felt. He glanced up and down her once more with complete dispassion and then, looking behind him as though to make sure no one else was watching, he asked, "Do you want to know about some of these?"

Marjorie nodded, diverted by this narrow-faced young man who had the air of one so aged in experience.

"All right," said Mr. Dantwill and, picking up a pencil, with sudden force he drew it through the fourth address she had written; then he drew the pencil back through it, raised the point to his lips, wet it, and vehemently leaded over her writing.

Marjorie felt herself flushing hotly when he looked up at her. The number, she remembered, was on Clearedge Street about two blocks from Mrs. Russell's flat; what would Mr. Dantwill have done — she wondered — if she had brought to him the number 4689? What was the matter at this number he had so emphatically obliterated? Something worse than the matter at 4689? Well, what was worse?

"Thank you very much," she whispered to Mr. Dantwill and abruptly recovering her list, she turned and left the office.

For suddenly she realized that, by erasing that address, Mr. Dantwill had told her exactly what she wanted — though she had not been conscious of the want. For she had approached Mr. Dantwill, in the ordinary way, to learn from him which was the best place on her list; but she did not want to go to the best; she wanted to go to a place not recommended, if she was to end her epoch of protection during which

she had been kept so ignorant of life that she not only had failed to suspect the secret of her father's but had utterly failed to comprehend it when, by accident, she had discovered it.

And she realized that Mr. Dantwill, in obliterating that address through which she might meet knowledge of the forbidden, was continuing what men had been doing to her all her life, — protecting her, keeping her from what they knew and would not have her know. But here she was because she meant, now, to know; so surely the most stupid act possible was for her to step from her protected home to another protected and approved shelter merely in another locality.

From the sidewalk, glancing back through the plate glass, she saw Mr. Dantwill still at the counter and gazing after her, although another woman was standing before him and trying to get his attention; and Marjorie hurried on.

Retracing her way to Clearedge Street, she found the forbidden number to be — as she recollected — a six-apartment building, recently made over into the sort of hostelry which, in France, Marjorie would have denominated a *pension.* Here in Chicago she did not know what to call it; evidently it was not exactly a hotel, neither was it a boarding house. If she did not know what to name it, neither did its proprietor seem to; for it bore no designation at all on the front except the street number and the sign "Rooms to Rent." Inside the door was nothing but the ordinary flat vestibule with six letter boxes surviving from the epoch when but six families domiciled the premises; but five of the card spaces were empty and in the sixth was the name "J. A. Cordeen."

A bell was below this, but Marjorie did not ring, for

the door to the hall stood wide and, inside, was open a door to the front room on the right which, from its position and decoration, evidently had once been the "living room" of the first floor flat south, but now, from its furniture, was a sort of office.

Marjorie walked in.

A "day bed" of the familiar pseudo-couch pattern was against the wall directly opposite the door; beside it was a row of neat, mahogany drawers, quite as suggestive of domestic as of any business use and giving Marjorie the impression that upon occasions, if not customarily, some one slept in this room; but filing cabinets in mahogany — which almost covered the spot on the wall paper where an upright piano had once stood — a telephone and a large mahogany roll-top desk, with its back to the door, created the office atmosphere. At the desk was sitting a trim, alert-looking red-haired woman of about forty. She did not look up at once but finished reading a typewritten letter which she held; she placed it with her other mail and, when she glanced up, it was with a complete dismissal of what she had been doing and with a wholeness of attention to the fresh matter in hand which made Marjorie appreciate that, whatever else this woman might be, she attended to business first.

"I've come to see about a room," Marjorie addressed her.

The woman's glance over her applicant was quick but amazingly comprehensive; Marjorie felt not only her clothing estimated but a shrewd guess made at her underclothing; not only the new cleanness of her gloves observed but the fact that, upon her gloved fingers, she wore no rings.

"Single or double?"

"Single, please," said Marjorie, meeker before this woman than she meant to be. "You're Mrs. Cordeen?"

"I'm Jen Cordeen," the woman replied as though, if Marjorie knew anything about the neighborhood, she must know her; so instantly Jen Cordeen discerned that Marjorie was certainly a stranger. "Where're you from?"

"Evanston," Marjorie replied truthfully before she thought; but Jen Cordeen did not press for more personal details; she was all incisiveness and action; she had a broad, capable face, firm and not unpleasing, and white, slightly separated teeth; she had a firm, healthy looking body with strong, well-developed shoulders and evident busts and small hips constrained under her tailored skirt. Her hair, contrasting with her clear, almost white skin, was of that henna shade of red which generally goes with energy, and the hue of her hair was, Marjorie thought, natural; probably she had darkened her brows but, perhaps, naturally they were of that deep, lustrous red. It would have been difficult to find a more vital contrast to the languid Mr. Dantwill, who had crossed out Jen Cordeen's address, but her reaction, like his, seemed to be to refrain from gratuitous questionings.

She picked up a couple of keys and Marjorie noticed with admiration her capable, broad hands.

"Come upstairs," she said and led Marjorie up the center flight of carpeted stairs to the second floor where two closed doors confronted them.

Jen Cordeen unlocked the one to the north which, originally, must have communicated with a living room similar in dimensions to the present office on the other side below; but here a partition had been built in, blocking off the room from the entrance door so as

to permit use of the inside hall without entering the front room. There was a door through the partition toward the front and Jen Cordeen, opening this, displayed a clean and attractive room with twin mahogany four-poster beds close together, a woman's dressing table and a man's dressing stand, two wardrobes and two chairs and a bookcase, empty. It had a blue imitation Chinese rug in good condition and heavy, expensive paper on the walls, — a tapestry-like paper of good design with gray herons standing in pale brown grasses. The three windows, all in the front, faced west over the street.

"I have this one double; I have one single — third floor, this side, that used to be a maid's room," Jen Cordeen said, making it plain by her tone that she would not waste time by showing this caller the single room.

"How much is this room?" Marjorie asked.

"Fifteen a week for two. There's a bath," Jen Cordeen half opened the door and displayed it. "Have you got a friend?"

"No."

"I've got a girl who's been waiting for some one to split this room with her. She asked if anybody else came single to let her know. Her name——" she hesitated for a fraction of a second, "is Clara Seeley. Looked like a real nice girl; she's demonstrating here this week, she said. You'll find her at the drug store, two blocks that way, one down."

The idea of rooming with a girl to be found here startled Marjorie when first put to her so calmly; but, for the purpose which brought her here, how could she start better than by making a friend at once? What harm, at any rate, in looking at Clara Seeley?

Arranging with Jen Cordeen to "hold" the room

for half an hour, Marjorie went to the drug store described to her.

It was, as are most of the extraordinary establishments which we still call drug stores, an emporium for a multitude of wares far more conspicuous than medicines and to-day the most conspicuous, beyond any rivalry, was face powder. For, in a sort of booth, arranged just within a front window, a dark-haired, handsome girl, with a remarkably well developed figure displayed in a tight, black, knitted dress, was "demonstrating."

When Marjorie had worked her way into the circle about the window, she looked at the girl before paying attention to what she was doing. She had such marvelous hair, for one attraction; black, it was, of the most living, healthy hues of black Marjorie had ever seen; her brows were as black as her long, beautiful lashes. Her eyes, too, seemed black before she looked up; but that was because the pupils were large; now they contracted and Marjorie saw the iris was of the clearest and warmest and softest of browns. Her skin was smooth and soft-looking and clear and dark, where she had left it free from powder; she was an Italian, Marjorie thought at this first glance at her; for she had the almost perfect symmetry of oval face and the delicate bowing of full-blooded lips which one sees in a beautiful Italian girl. But she was taller than an Italian was likely to be and, in the breadth of her cheek bones and also in her shoulders, were marks of a larger race; and her manner did not make Marjorie class her with Italians. She had a bold, easy-going, amused air which the crowd found attractive as they watched her polish her perfect, oval nails with paste from a pink box; from an elaborate jar she scooped cold cream to

rub on her cheek; she rubbed it off, almost immediately, with conspicuous completeness, and applied powder — and she smiled with those delicate, dark lips showing flashes of white, perfect teeth. She was fascinating when she smiled and looked at one as she did at Marjorie with an "amused at me? Well, I don't mind" air. She was remarkable, too, in that, when repeating her demonstration, she never made a single move mechanically or appeared bored; she began it again with eagerness, like an artist, with grace and enthusiasm always fresh for each new circle of spectators.

"I'm not amused at you," Marjorie wanted to say when the girl, noticing that she remained, gazed at her again. "I want to ask you to room with me," Marjorie completed to herself; and then the Marjorie Hale, who was the daughter of Corinna Winfield Hale, reasserted herself. "Are you mad, planning to invite a girl out of a drug-store window to share a room with you?"

Yet, if the room was to be at that forbidden address of Jen Cordeen's, who better to have for your first friend than this smiling, I-take-care-of-myself girl in this window? Did she know what was the matter with Jen Cordeen's, Marjorie wondered, and was she meaning to take a room there, anyway? Or had no Mr. Dantwill warned her?

The girl, having again rubbed off the cream from her face and applied powder, gazed straight at Marjorie once more and smiled as if to say, "All right; you're welcome to more amusement from me if you want it." And Marjorie had either to go on or to go in and explain; so, after another moment, she went in and took her first opportunity to talk to Clara Seeley.

Of course Marjorie did not begin with direct overtures about Jen Cordeen's; she started only with casual

words about face creams; but Clara Seeley discerned that she was interested in more than cosmetics; and Marjorie liked her for her discernment and the way she showed it when gradually, as though both were interested in powders and cold creams, Clara Seeley drew her off to a quiet part of the store.

"What's the matter?" Clara demanded then practically and directly. "Say, was I makin' some play I couldn't realize from my side of the window? Something you sort-a want to tell me? If that's so, shoot; I want to know; you can't hurt my feelin's."

"Oh, no," Marjorie denied.

"Then it must be somethin' 'bout yourself. Say, you're down here without carfare; or the bottom's dropped out the family safe-deposit box and father can't put up no more margins and you're lookin' over demonstratin' as a job."

"That's nearer it," Marjorie confessed, liking this girl for her warmth as well as her quickness. And she thought as they stood there and talked, if she required at present a home under conditions new and different, here surely was a girl about as opposite as possible to herself; yet here was a girl who, if directness of eyes on yours and steadiness of lip meant anything, was straight as any girl Marjorie Hale knew.

When Marjorie imagined any of her own friends standing, as she had stood, in Mrs. Russell's flat and later in Rinderfeld's office, asking why her father had done as he had, Marjorie could imagine them only stunned as she had been, and she could imagine Rinderfeld treating them only as he had treated her. But she could not imagine this Clara Seeley as so stunned, or Rinderfeld or any other man treating her like a child. Marjorie had never before thought what dis-

tinguished such a girl from herself; but she thought now, "She's one who knows and who's always known what's been kept from me." And she thought if she searched all the city, she could not find a better companion than this girl for her exploration.

An hour and a half later, entering her father's home in Evanston with receipt in her pocket for one week's rent in advance for half of Room 12, signed by J. A. Cordeen — receipt for the other half of Room 12 reposing in the pocket of the skin-tight, black, knitted dress of Clara Seeley, wiping cold cream from her face before an admiring group at a drug-store window — Marjorie Hale inquired for her mother and learned that she had gone out; her father, of course, was in. He was having a remarkably good day and had been dressed for an hour; he was not resting, for Martin had heard him telephoning a minute or so ago.

Marjorie could ask for no better opportunity; so she went to her room only to leave her hat and gloves and to straighten herself a little before knocking at her father's door.

CHAPTER XVII

SHE came in upon him seated in the brown oak Morris chair which had been "father's chair" as long as Marjorie could remember and which went back, even before the seven-room house on the fifty-foot lot in Irving Park. It went back, Marjorie had been told, to the epoch before her birth; for her mother and father had bought it together for their first living room in the cheap, tiny flat they had taken their first year; and now, no matter what discord it caused with other furnishings, always it must be in the room which was particularly father's. So it was here in this half study, half dressing room opening off his bedroom. How could he keep it near him now, Marjorie wondered. Why did he want to?

He wore his brown, business suit of tweed, of color becoming to his brown hair and brown eyes, and particularly so now that blood was again in his cheeks; he looked not only well this morning but almost vigorous in this suit which had been freshly pressed for him; his linen was fresh, of course; and this morning he had on shoes instead of slippers. Only a slight bulge under his waistcoat, not noticeable if you did not look for it, betrayed where he was still bandaged. The odor in the air told that he recently had been smoking one of the two cigarettes of his present daily allowance, but he had finished it and had been glancing through the newspaper which he dropped beside him as Marjorie came in.

"It's good to hear somebody," he said with cheerful greeting, smiling at her; then, as she closed the door carefully, "What've you to tell me, Margy?"

She had entered with her opening words prepared but, facing him, she forsook them and only said, "Father, why aren't you out on a day like this?"

"Oh, I've been out on the porch — like an inmate of an old soldier's home. But I draw the line on wheel chairs in public."

"Doesn't Doctor Grantham want you to drive yet?"

He shook his head, his eyes widening slightly as he watched her. "What is it, Margy?" he asked again.

"Did he see you to-day?" she replied.

"Grantham? No; he's promoted me to calls every other morning."

"Oh. Have you," she started and stopped, going hot and fiery red, and then she blurted, "have you had a full talk with him, father?"

"About?" he questioned, steadily, his eyes narrowing.

"Clearedge Street."

It was no bombshell at all; plainly this was what he had been expecting, and it brought him not the slightest visible agitation. On the contrary, it seemed to give him relief, and Marjorie was not prepared for that; she had keyed herself up to assuming the rôle of accuser of him — even beyond that of accuser to that of a disposer of his destiny. But instantly it was clear that he had no idea of permitting any such heroic reversal of position.

"Of course, Grantham told me you were at Clearedge Street," he replied, almost impatiently.

"Yes, father; I know everything."

"No, you don't!" he denied quickly. "You know nothing or next to nothing."

"About you and Mrs. Russell?"

"Exactly."

That checked her; she angered at him but she did not know what to say. He started forward with an impulse to rise, but remembered his hurt and did not. "Sit down, Marjorie," he directed shortly.

"Father, no!"

"All right," he accepted, looking up at her all a-tremble before him. "It's been bad on you, Margy, hasn't it?" he said, with the first tone of guilt which had got into his voice. "I wouldn't have had that, you know." Now it was not guilt, only pity for her.

Marjorie tossed her head. "I would." She would not let him be sorry for her.

He gazed steadily at her. "How can he feel so little?" she thought. "You've shown good sense so far, Marjorie," he said evenly. "I'm not supposing anything, but you will continue to show the same sense, though I will make the carry from now on as easy for you as possible. Before I was hurt, you know your mother and you were going to Europe; I had your reservation on the *Aquitania* for the sailing which is now a week from this Saturday. Your mother"—— at second mention of her, he shifted his gaze from Marjorie and looked steadily out the window — "expected to give up that reservation or abandon the trip altogether. Of course, the latter did not prove necessary; nor has the former. I convinced your mother of that this morning. There is no reason, out of regard for my health, why you should not carry out your previous plan; there are, of course, many reasons why you should. The one which was sufficient to convince her was that it is

extremely likely that Mr. Dorsett is to have a successor this week or next. Whether or not I am to become president of our company, now depends ——" he glanced from the window to Marjorie when he said "now," and when, immediately, he repeated it; and she wondered if he knew of her encounter with Stanway. If he did, he betrayed it by no other sign than iterating —"now depends on the directors' confidence in my state of health. Nothing can show our certainty of it better than your mother and you adhering to your known plan when I return to my office next week. I have bought the cabin for you for a week from Saturday."

Marjorie moved tensely nearer him, with muscles throughout her body pulling in an emotion new to her. She did not feel angry so much as she felt held cheaply and as a child; for a moment she was so stiff that her lips seemed unable to move and, trembling, she said, "I have not the slightest idea of going to Europe, father."

"Why not?"

"Why should I?"

"You had planned to, Marjorie," he repeated, very quietly. "You were going with your mother. She will expect you to go now."

"Yes; and you, father?"

He understood what she meant, but he would not show it. Instead, he said, "I expect you to go, dear. I want you to go." And the way he requested that almost disarmed her and suddenly, before she could be reprepared against him, he leaned forward and completed her discomfiture, "I ask you to go, Marjorie."

She fought to stop the quivering of her lips, but it

overcame her and her hands began to shake and she burst out crying.

"Margy!" he appealed to her.

"Don't touch me now, father!"

He had half come up from his chair and that shot him back like a blow, dropping him. She saw it through the blur of her crying. "Oh, I didn't mean that, father!"

She was at his knees now on the floor before him; she clasped his knees, hugged them and cried and cried. But his hands did not touch her, and his knees, which she clasped, did not move. She controlled herself and stood up, avoiding his face.

"I'm not going away from Chicago," she said to him then, steadily and finally.

"Why?"

"You know why."

"Yes; I suppose you mean to watch me."

They were confronting each other fairly and, in that contest of eyes on eyes, it was Marjorie, not her father, who first broke.

"Oh, father, I'd go to Europe with mother so gladly, I'd go anywhere, I'd do anything at all if you just told me that when we were gone you'd never see that woman again."

Something about that cut into him; perhaps it was her trusting to his word when his honor, in the respect which filled their minds, had proved so completely gone. But he made no reply; he looked off and after a moment she turned her back to him and went to his window, where she leaned her arms on the crossbar of the window sash and stared out. She tried to think clearly but she could not; she could not be conscious even of feeling. It was not at all like the paralysis of emotion

which had come to her in Mrs. Russell's flat when first she "knew"; this was the exhaustion, the complete draining of the feelings which then had filled her but since had been seeping away. Gazing out her father's window to the ell of the house where was her own room and down at the lawn about her home which she had loved as no other spot on earth, she realized that she was parting from it forever, and she not only failed to care but she was sure that, later, she would never care. She saw that her father did not yet suspect her plan of leaving his house and she was glad of that.

He was under sufficient excitement now, as he got to his feet, and with sudden alarm she cried, "Father, you must not stand!"

"I'm all right; keep still, Marjorie; stay where you are. You have done me certain services; you have put me in your debt in certain respects, so that you may feel I owe you some things. I do, but I do not include among them necessity to subscribe to your ideas of conduct nor to your judgments. If you prefer to stay at home, rather than accompany your mother, that is a matter of your own choice; I shall arrange for you here accordingly and for your mother to go with another companion."

And this he did succeed in arranging during the following days, for his wife never had definitely counted upon Marjorie accompanying her; she could agree therefore that it was probably as well for Marjorie to remain with her father for a while and come over later; Corinna Hale, herself, had long before laid out a program for this trip, as she did for all her activities, engaging one week for a visit with an English friend, another for certain long-planned studies in London, and so on. Accordingly, upon the day exactly a week later,

Charles Hale and his daughter went with his wife to see her off on the Twentieth Century Limited for New York. He was strong and apparently quite well then; she spoke about his good appearance several times and, after he had put her in her compartment and she had exacted his last promise to take good care of himself and they had kissed and parted, she proudly watched him out the window as he stood waving good-by. Looking back, she carried with her the image of him as he stood there waving at her; and when she imagined him otherwise, she renewed her image of him engrossed in business during the day and at recreation at his golf club or at the homes of their friends, — comforting images of a man in the years of his greatest vigor and success, content with such thoughts of her as she held of him, and neither seeking nor desiring close companionship. "I'll send him that new Ring Lardner book," she thought indulgently. And she imagined him at home in the evenings reading it and the newspapers into which he always delved amazingly; she imagined him having Marjorie play the piano for him or running off his favorite records. For Marjorie, in spite of that receipt for advanced rent from J. A. Cordeen, had remained at home that week; and her mother, of course, had not the slightest idea of her intention.

Nor had her father any suspicion of it even upon this afternoon when he parted from her at the station to go to his office. Since yesterday he had resumed his management of Tri-Lake Products' affairs; and, rather as a result of his return, the directors were meeting to elect a new president in the place of Dorsett, who was personally to place his resignation before them.

E. H. Stanway, vice president and a director, was in the directors' room, and Charles Hale, general man-

ager, was outside it, but he waited the outcome with little anxiety, for Dorsett already had conferred with him.

"Hale," said old Dorsett, "I'm obliged to give up soon; I might as well now while I can steer you into the place instead of Stanway. What's been the matter with you, man? Not a malignancy, as I've heard said."

"No," said Hale, as directly. "I was shot by a divorced husband in a flat up on the north side."

"Hmm!" Dorsett considered, his eyes narrowing with speculation; and Hale knew that he had heard that, too, and from what source. "What are the chances of it happening again?"

"It will not happen again," said Hale.

"You mean it will be impossible for it to happen again?"

"It will not happen again," Hale repeated; and Dorsett squinted his old eyes and let himself be satisfied with that.

So, about five o'clock, Charles Hale received invitation to the directors' room — where E. H. Stanway and one Stanway cousin, who had stood out against the rest, now were not; here old Dorsett seized his hand and introduced the new president of the corporation.

There was a touch of ceremony about it which surprisingly affected Charles Hale, and when at last he was alone and free to turn where he wished, he felt his new triumph more than he would have thought possible; it caused him to review his whole life, — to recall his boyhood in the little, plain, meager home in the Illinois town where his father had worked patiently and persistently for very little reward; to remember, particularly, his mother who had prayed for him and, more

practically, had scrimped and spared to help him through "high school"; it caused him to compare his success, with frank satisfaction, with the progress of others who had been boys with him; it brought him to his winning of his first "raise" in Tri-Lake and bearing the trophy of it to Corinna Winfield in her Edgewater home, — to the beautiful, self-assured girl whose coolness and aloofness then so taunted and allured him. Each of his triumphs since that day up to this had been another trophy to bring to her; and this, too, was a trophy for her; for he telegraphed her on board the train that he had it.

That was a far better way for him, this time, than to tell her personally; to another woman he would, if he could, bear this his trophy in person; but prudence warned him that, on this night, he had better not; so he contented himself with speaking to her over a telephone. Then he turned to his home to bring his triumph to his daughter.

And, as he thought about her, he realized that he wished to impress her more than any one else with his vindication, for that was what he called it to himself. He had no need to justify himself before his wife who, though undoubtedly pleased at his winning higher position, only expected it of him as a matter of course; and he had no need for vindication of himself before Sybil Russell. So, while Leonard was driving him home, Charles Hale dwelt on his meeting with his daughter, which would be their first after they were left in the house alone; and, although he had told her he did not subscribe to her ideas of conduct or to her judgments, yet he was particularly glad to be bearing to her proof that other men did not. Until he actually possessed this endorsement, he had not confessed to himself how

much he needed it; in fact, without it he did not now see how he could have got on in the same house with his daughter, alone.

He had reserved mentioning his good news to Leonard till the man asked for orders after opening the door for him to get out; then he told it and took Leonard's hand. Martin, who had opened the house door, heard the news and he offered his congratulations, too, and Hale gave him a handshake; so the master of the house, and the president of Tri-Lake Products and Material Corporation entered his home aglow and ready for his daughter. It let him down a little, but did not trouble him, when he learned she had been home an hour ago but had gone out. Then, on the table in his room, he found an envelope upon which she had written " Father " and which contained:

I have been waiting only for mother to go before leaving. Do not expect me back and do not bother about me; I know exactly what I am to do and have made all my arrangements.

Marjorie.

It frightened him and, even after the first shock, he could not argue himself out of his dread; it was too ominous and premeditated, that note. It explained too well her compliance, a week ago, with all his demands except that she accompany her mother, and it suggested to him — more, it warned him — that anything might come.

He crumpled it in his hand and strode into her room to find that, in so far as he could reckon her wardrobe, Marjorie had gone off taking with her only the suit she had worn that day and that too low-cut dress her mother had given her for the Lovells' dance. Underwear,

stockings, night-dresses and lingerie she might have taken, and probably had; he had no census of such garments. Some were left in her drawers but, he believed, not as many as she had. She had left her rings, pins and necklaces.

"What does she mean to do to herself?" he put his terror for her into coherent demand. Self-destruction, of course, suggested itself to him; for a moment he imagined her, clad in that low-cut dress in which last she had been innocently happy, casting herself into the lake. Then he denied that fright; she was doing something extreme, he was sure of that, but she was not stupid enough to satisfy herself with suicide. No; then what — what to punish him? More frightful images than of Marjorie white and still in the waters of the lake seized him.

Of course he telephoned to Billy, with the result only of terrifying Bill, who could not tell him anything useful. He telephoned also to Rinderfeld, not suspecting that Rinderfeld knew and therefore he only informed Rinderfeld of what had happened. Rinderfeld questioned him fully, noted the answers and never let him dream that in his address book, and transcribed in a code so that no one finding it could read, was the number on Clearedge Street where Marjorie was.

He drove up there later in the evening, Rinderfeld, with no premature intention of calling upon her, but only to look the ground over; and this was as well for him, since Marjorie, after delaying her arrival for a week, was wasting no time in getting started in the new society she had entered. Clara Seeley was going to a dance that night and she had not only invited Marjorie but had supplied her with one of her own friends

for a partner. Clara had hooked up Marjorie's dress, admiringly, and helped her, expertly, with her hair.

"Some hair you have, dearie!" said Clara, with professional admiration. "And some skin!"

Marjorie threw over her shoulders an evening cape, which was one outer garment her father had not missed, and descended with Clara to the hall where her roommate made her known to a dark-haired and large-featured youth of twenty-five, "My friend, Mr. Saltro," and to a taller, partially bald and ascetic-faced man, five years older, "My friend, Mr. Troufrie." Both were in "dress suits."

Mr. Saltro was, by prearrangement, to be Marjorie's partner, but she had supposed that the four of them were to go to the dance hall together and remain a party of four through the occasion. Likely enough Mr. Saltro had expected this but, upon seeing the girl, he was a man able to change his mind. For, though the car which was waiting was perfectly capable of containing four persons, Mr. Saltro held back and detained his partner until Clara and Mr. Troufrie got in; then he closed the door and said to the driver, genially, "You can skip on now!"

Immediately he raised his hand to signal an empty car approaching. "Taxi! Taxi!"

With Clara's car gone, and the other standing, door open, before her, Marjorie made the choice between retreat and getting in.

"Four's all right when the crowd all knows each other," Mr. Saltro uttered approval, as he placed himself on the seat beside Marjorie and the car was in motion. "But for getting acquainted, nothing doing." And he began pulling at the fingers of the new brown glove on his right hand.

CHAPTER XVIII

MARJORIE watched him bare his hand and then wonder what to do with it as he gazed down at her; for she made no correlative move. She not merely kept on her own gloves but she thrust her hands under her thighs and sat on them — a bit of taxi cab technique which evidently was new to Mr. Saltro and which puzzled him.

"We're going to Sennen's Hall," he said, and plainly it was a commentary on her extraordinary procedure.

"Yes," said Marjorie, blankly. "Clara told me."

"You haven't known Clara long?"

"About a week," Marjorie replied and withdrew her hands from under her as the swing of the cab about a corner swayed her toward Mr. Saltro, who seemed to become doubtful whether her original posture had been taken to discourage an advance or was really an inviting offer of helplessness beside him.

"Ever toddled at Sennen's?" he questioned, while he debated the alternative.

"No."

"Swell hall and fair music," Mr. Saltro said, with a certain charity of approval, professional in its tone.

"You're a musician yourself, Clara tells me," Marjorie said quickly, seizing the opening to turn his attention from herself to him.

"Oh, I play the trombone a little," Mr. Saltro admitted modestly; and, though she caught a deeper breath than any of the last few minutes, she accused

herself for weak prudishness for even momentarily thus making herself Marjorie Hale at the start of her first evening as Marjorie Conway.

Here she was with Jake Saltro — trombonist of the Geyner Quartette, "jazz for dances, dinners, entertainments of all sorts"; and likely she could accompany him in a taxicab and even to Sennen's without risky revelations, if she held herself as Marjorie Hale, a good girl from an honorable, protected home; but that was exactly what she was not to do. She was through with "protection" and false honor; wild, reckless impulses leaped in her to-night; how long had they seemed utterly overwhelmed within her! Ever since that evening that Billy and Gregg came to dinner before the Lovells' dance, when she had come down with white shoulders in her too low-cut dress to shock dear, proper, absolutely safe Billy.

Now, in the taxicab beside Mr. Saltro, and wearing that same dress under her cape, she almost laughed aloud in contempt of herself as she thought back on that "daring" incident at home. Yes, at home and among her friends, chaperoned by her mother and with Billy, — Billy, who instead of taking advantage of her, would protect her against herself; and with Gregg and her other men friends who, as Rinderfeld had said, would consider themselves lower than dogs if they let themselves actually consider dishonor of a girl such as she had been.

What was she now? She asked herself the question and appreciated that her escort was debating with himself the same question; she appreciated that, upon sight of her in this daring dress — which, in those days after her father had been shot, she had never had altered — Mr. Saltro had made for himself a different judgment

of her than he evidently had formed from Clara's report, and he had decided upon the definite investment of the difference between the cost of half a taxi for four and a taxi for two; at this moment, plainly he was wondering whether he was "stuck" while she kept him talking about the trombone and his idea of dance music. He had no real enthusiasm for it, so the talk died down and he gazed out of his window, while before them the meter audibly clicked and clicked as they dashed along.

"I ought to pay for the cab," Marjorie thought to herself, guiltily, "or give him what he expected for it. Probably it's only his arm around me; I'm going to let him put it around me, anyway, when we dance. For of course we're going to dance."

"Nice spring night," said Mr. Saltro, almost sarcastically, and slurring "spring" to express emotional expectation which one might naturally hold for such a season.

"Yes, it's the first time this year I've really felt it's spring," Marjorie rejoined, partly from the reaction to the reckless in her, partly from her own amazement at the feeling which was hers to-night. Strange how at home, after her discovery of the fact of Clearedge Street, spring itself, though physically arrived long days ago, had been stifled within her, and yet now spring could seize her when she herself was starting off from Clearedge Street.

"Some season, spring!" said Mr. Saltro, with marked diminution of his sarcasm and sitting nearer her. He held no reference, obviously, to budding trees and blossoming flowers, or even to the softness of the evening air coming in the open window of the taxicab door; in so far as he referred at all, it was to the

couples clasping each other's arms as they strolled, "twos-ing" most heedlessly on the walks beside the boulevard down which the clicking taxi drove.

Mr. Saltro thrust a hand into a pocket. "Ever smoke?" he tried Marjorie, with revived hope as he drew out an elaborately chased cigarette case.

"Yes," said Marjorie, remembering the last time she took a cigarette; from Gregg, it was, in his car, on the way to the Lovells' dance. How cheap to smoke then, between Billy and Gregg, and deny it now!

Mr. Saltro took out a cigarette for her; momentarily he held it, and if she guessed correctly his thought, he was deliberating the tact of lighting the cigarette for her and passing it from his lips to hers. So she took one for herself, but let him hold the match before her lips and she leaned away again.

He considered her more approvingly. "Those your kind?"

She nodded.

"Have some of this?" said Mr. Saltro.

This was a silver flask with cup top, which he obtained from a hip pocket.

"What is it?" she asked calmly.

"Bourbon."

"Your own still or bootlegged?"

"Twelve dollars a quart," assured Mr. Saltro, proudly. "You've taken a drink before now, haven't you?" he pressed quickly, feeling the threat of more prudishness.

"Certainly," Marjorie admitted honestly. "Often."

"This is fine stuff! From the last half of a bottle; the other half never done anybody anything but good." He poured a cup full and drank it for proof. "Try one now?" he urged. "Look here, if you don't want

to put a little pep into yourself and enjoy the evening, why did you ask Clara to have me take you to Sennen's? I like to carry a queen; I'm not crazy to drag a dumb-bell to a dance." He was pouring the cup-top full again and splashing some over; he would not force her to drink, she thought, but certainly he meant to hold the cup to her mouth for her. She took it, turned it in her fingers for a few seconds while he watched her; then she drank almost all the raw, stinging fluid, choking a little as she handed back the cup. He finished it and twisted down the cap.

"More whenever you say so," he offered.

The burning sensation in her throat gave way to warmth and a slight feeling of spinning fullness in her head; strong stuff, it was. Next Mr. Saltro would have his arm about her, she thought; but this did not happen until they were at Sennen's, had joined up with Clara and Mr. Troufrie again and were dancing. For Mr. Saltro was a gentleman, by Sennen's standards, at least; and Sennen's was no underworld palace nor vicious dance hall, notorious from police raids; Sennen's took consistent care to be decent and respectable. A man usually, at least, had to take the trouble to gain an introduction to a girl before he spoke to her; no lady without escort was admitted; here and there were girls who actually were chaperoned; and many more arrived, with their escorts, in groups of four to six, as Marjorie and Clara had; and in the wide, noisy, overdecorated hall, there was conspicuous and vigilant censorship of the dancing.

Sennen himself, a small, alert, dapper man in speckless evening clothes, oversaw everything, as Mr. Saltro, during his second toddle with Marjorie, pointed out.

"Sennen's certainly foolish — just like a fox," Mr.

Saltro commented admiringly, as he watched the little man direct a much larger employe remove a certain too inebriated couple from the floor. Mr. Saltro and Marjorie did not stop toddling; no one stopped for such an occurrence, but merely turned, as they toddled, to keep a view so as not to miss any really interesting developments. "You got to hip-pack your own irrigation here; he won't take no chance selling it. And look at the dancing, too; ever seen decenter than that? He seen from the start the extreme shimmie wouldn't keep on drawing the best people; and he cut out too much cheek-to-cheek stuff, too. Nice looking bunch, what'd you think?" And he renewed his clasp about Marjorie which had relaxed somewhat while he talked, and he moved his hand slightly on her back while they danced.

Her back was bare, since she was wearing that dress her mother had bought for her; she had over her shoulders the scarf which her father, on that night so long ago, had insisted upon her using; but Mr. Saltro lacked the care for its proper placement which had distinguished Billy. Other men at the Lovells' dance, and Gregg had been among them, also had lacked Billy's meticulousness for her; it was nothing new for Marjorie, when dancing, to have a man's bare hand below her bare shoulders; but there was something very definite — and something rather stupendous in its revelation — about the clasp of Mr. Saltro on her flesh.

To be fair with him, it was not individual to Jake Saltro; Sam Troufrie held her, not in the same way quite, but with the same sensation; other men — Clara's friends — held her so, with one exception. It was more amazing to Marjorie Hale, when she glanced about

at the nice looking girls circling her; for they were nice looking — girls prettier and livelier and yet quite as "nice" looking as most at the Lovells' dance and more modestly dressed, the majority of them. Marjorie herself was, from her undress, as conspicuous as any one there. (Indeed, Sennen had censorship on decolleté; and Mr. Saltro at first had had his doubts about his partner "passing" but had been too delicate to say so till he was certain that Sennen had seen her and passed her.)

The men were, most of them, nice looking, too; they were cruder, of course, but generally more energetic looking and more interested in life than the ex-college boys of the suburbs; and as they danced with the girls under Sennen's watchful eye, Marjorie realized that if she had come in merely to look on and had not offered herself for partner of Saltro and his friends, she scarcely would have suspected that anything in particular was going on, on the floor. But almost constantly in the arms of her partners, it proceeded, something so slight in physical manifestation, something so subtle and artful that Marjorie could protest against it as little as the ever watchful Sennen could object; for to protest, you must be able at least to describe what you forbid.

When Marjorie twisted her shoulders, endeavoring to escape it, always she felt it again in a moment. "Stop, please!" at last, she begged Mr. Saltro, after a series of these endeavors; he stopped dancing, actually unaware — Marjorie believed — that she could refer to anything but an accident.

"Somebody hurt your foot?" he questioned.

Again it was for her to go ahead or abandon the experience she had undertaken; the other girls, who

undoubtedly were sharing it with her, danced on blissfully, smiling and snuggling into their partners' arms as they swayed and whispered intimately. Marjorie gave herself again to Mr. Saltro's clasp; to Mr. Troufrie's; to the arms of the others who besought her, demanding another dance.

They knew she was not of them; or they found it out. Others were there who also were not of them — men, mostly. Indeed, all others of the same caste as Marjorie who were there were men; she picked them out one by one in the moving maze of the floor and discerned them distinguishing her from the other girls; and, realizing what they were there for, she despised them, aware that they even more were despising her. She recognized no one, and, fortunately, no one appeared who recognized her.

"I'm starting home now; gotta work to-morrow," Clara yawningly announced to Marjorie at half-past twelve. "You don't need to come; Jake'll like to stay."

But Marjorie went, and with Clara, so the four were together in the taxi on the ride to Clearedge Street, during which Mr. Troufrie frankly kept Clara in his arms and she, as frankly, kissed him; and so far from minding observation, Mr. Troufrie genially jeered Mr. Saltro for his conspicuous loneliness on his seat.

CHAPTER XIX

ALONE with Clara in room Number 12 at Jen Cordeen's, Marjorie tensely dropped off her cape, went to her glass and stared at herself and turned about to discover Clara out of her dancing dress and limp on her back on her bed, with arms stretched above her head and yawning peacefully at the ceiling. "Gawd, I'm sleepy!"

"Sleepy!" Marjorie shot back so excitedly that Clara started up and sat, leaning on her hands.

"Why, anything happen to you to-night, dearie?" she demanded with suspicious concern.

"Anything!" Marjorie repeated, glaring at her roommate; and she gave a gesture of hopelessness.

"Bourbon don't keep me awake," Clara volunteered, as though having come to the conclusion that Marjorie complained of excitation from that. "Does just the opposite to me. Just want to sleep; that's all." And she yawned again but did not lie down. "Come on, get it off your chest, kid," Clara invited, pulling out a couple of hairpins and shaking down her hair.

"Clara, every man I danced with to-night — but one — was — was ——"

"What?" urged Clara indistinctly, for the hairpins between her lips.

"Trying me!"

Clara's hair had fallen, perhaps by accident, before her face. "Sure," she said, still impeded by hairpins. "You were a new one to them and mighty damn good-

looking; and who'd you think I was steering you up against? A bunch of dead ones?" And she put the rest of her pins in her mouth and tossed back her hair.

Marjorie's impulse was to bolt from the room; for the instant she had a home in Evanston to which she could flee; then she controlled herself. "You needn't swear at me," was all she said.

"You needn't be so damned superior to my friends. Are you, anyway? Are you?" Clara demanded clearly, gathering the pins from her lips and depositing them on her bed. "You and I might just as well have a show-down right now, Marjorie whatever-your-real-name-is. What're you here for?"

"I've told you," Marjorie evaded.

"Sure you told me you wanted to room here; going to get a job, support yourself. Family's had reverses; all right. You say you like the looks of me; I liked the looks of you, and I do right now, Marjorie; never better. You pay your half the room for a week while you're not here; that's square; now you show up, hear I'm going to Sennen's. I say want to come along? You say, who with? I say, two men want to take me; I'll spare you one. I do it; he takes you into town and gives you a good time and you knock him and everybody else but one, who probably didn't have any pep in him. Now what'd Jake do or Sam Troufrie, or whoever they all were, when I wasn't looking?"

"Nothing different from when you were looking," Marjorie rejoined steadily.

"Oh!" said Clara, and braided her hair thoughtfully for a minute, gazing away.

Marjorie's mind took one of those recesses which one requires between tensest struggles. How beautiful Clara was, she observed; what wonderful smooth, dark

skin; how graceful and rounded her naked neck and arms and her slender, perfectly proportioned legs in her black culottes and stockings. Marjorie was thinking of men and, with regard to them, she appreciated that never had she known a girl who must be more desirable, physically, than Clara Seeley.

"What did they do to you different from what you're used to?" Clara formed her query at last and met Marjorie's eyes squarely; and Marjorie could not answer. So Clara said, "I know. A few from your bunch have had their arms around me. Not to-night; a couple of 'em tried to but all space was under lease. But they have and sometimes they've sort of drowsed, dancing — forgotten themselves, as it was; I mean forgotten me, Molly, the manicure girl. So they held me in those moments like they would a girl friend of theirs from home — like they would you. Tight enough but nothin' back of it, Marjorie; no bite! I know what you mean. That's what you're here for; to get the snap, ain't it? Honest? Then what're you sore about? Aren't you here to play the real game?"

"What game?"

"Oh, my game," said Clara. "And your game — when you're away from home and mamma and papa; any girl's game who's got a decent looking face and a figure that ain't actually repulsive. Hell — 'scuse me, Marjorie, but I never did take serious the first four or five commandments — do you suppose there's a man born who wouldn't 'get' a good-looking girl if he could? You been brought up at home, I understand; Evanston. How many of you happened?"

Marjorie flushed slightly. "Just me," she told. "I never had any brothers or sisters."

"So papa and mamma both had all their time to give

to you. Of course, that don't make it more simple for you, though I do understand that even your nice little boys have been treatin' you nice home girls some rough lately. Even the society columns been talkin' about it; and the 'chaperone'; you been checkin' your corsets between leavin' mother and startin' the waltz with Willy. Naughty, naughty! And you been motorin' out after dark in a Packard roadster all alone in a seat beside a boy who you ain't known more than all your life and who wouldn't do nothin' to himself, if he actually *did* anything to you, but have to skip the State and force his family to sell out and move. They're all duds when they're out with you, and you know it; you go through the motions of playin' with fire and actin' up reckless; but you know those boys ain't actually goin' to do any damage to you. If they were, you'd have begun to suspect it, wearin' that dress, before my friends begun judgin' by appearance to-night. What'd you want me to tell 'em?"

"Nothing," said Marjorie, humbly.

"Kid," cried Clara, with sudden emotion and clasping her roommate's hand. "You're up against something you ain't told to me. That's all right! Gawd, I don't mean to jump on you; just the opposite, dearie. I've had all the advantages in this game. Nine of us, where I come from — seven grew up, too; or are growin'. A few miles over that way," she nodded vaguely west and cityward, as she let go of Marjorie's hand. "Ever hear of Augusta Street? Oh, sure you have, if you come from Evanston; Northwestern Settlement's on it. Well, the Selitz family — that's us — used to be just off Augusta; and I don't believe there was a bunch that visitin' ladies used to get more worked up about than us. We had two rooms to live in — the

six or seven of us, I forget exactly how many we had around then — when somebody dropped in with the idea that it was terrible. Terrible? Hell, we'd just moved out of one that I could remember, all right; and those two were still lookin' mighty wide to me. Then they started that talk that a man mustn't beat up his woman; who'd they want a man to take on when he got soused, — a cop? And that sex education stuff! Excuse me, Marjorie; I just gotta laugh. I musta been about twelve, I think, when some one slipped me one of those little white books for girls with nice pink apple blossoms on the covers and startin' out with all about the pollination of flowers.

"I don't know who that woman was or where she come from — she was too innocent for the settlement, I think now, as I recall it; but I do remember she sort-a blushed and whispered to me as though I was to get a sort-a shock when I read it; told me to come to her, if there was anything puzzled me. Well, she was right; I never had anything puzzle me like that book — talkin' about flowers and birds and animals for nine-tenths the way through and then workin' up to a whisper of what, if you was a good guesser, you'd see was meant to be girls and men. And me — well, where do you suppose I'd have been by that time, if I hadn't started, when I was a kid, 'bout eight chapters beyond where that book blushed itself to death? Gawd, I don't remember a time when I didn't know what men was after. But that book did do me some good tonight."

"How?" asked Marjorie, still meekly.

"When I was watchin' you; how could anybody get your way? I was wonderin'; and what was you thinkin' a man was thinkin' about when he grabbed you?

Then I remembered that book and began thinkin' it must have printed what was information for somebody; and I guessed it was for you. Of course, most of it was harmless, but it had one whopper of a lie toward the end that wouldn't have done a thing to me if I'd been simp enough to believe it. I mean the part that talked about a girl keeping herself pure and avoiding impure men for the reward of getting some time a pure one, as if there was such. There ain't no such animal; there's just one sort of man; when you think there's two, the difference is in the places you see 'em."

"Then why — why," Marjorie stammered, "do you have anything to do with them; why do you let them — touch you? Why do you go out with them and ——" she stopped.

Clara laughed. "Do I pet and kiss comin' home in a cab? Oh, don't worry none about me, dearie. I know more about that stuff — the woman pays — than the one that wrote it. At the same time, when a man does show you a swell time and spend his money, you don't get anywhere by being yourself an absolute dead beat. Sam knows just exactly the distance I step, and knows there's just exactly no chance of my stretching it with him. You better go to bed now, Marjorie; say, ain't the paper on this room swell and this carpet and all this" — Clara gestured vaguely but indicatively of the wide, pleasant spaciousness of the room — "just for you and me."

And Clara continued serenely undressing; and in a minute she was in bed. "Never mind 'bout the light," she murmured comfortably. "Whole Commonwealth-Edison Company — couldn't keep — me awake — if it was — camped on ceiling." And she was asleep —

actually asleep, Marjorie saw when she crept over by Clara's bed and looked down at her tranquil face.

Marjorie put out the light and opened wide one of the windows; she made no start toward bed but stood near the open window staring down on Clearedge Street, while her thought leaped to Mrs. Russell's apartment where, for all she knew or might suppose, her father had returned; it leaped, her thought, to her mother sleeping, undoubtedly as serenely as Clara, in her compartment on the train rushing to New York; it leaped, for less vivid instants of imagination, to Billy, to Gregg; to Rinderfeld; to Mr. Saltro; and then, abandoning its jumping from individual to individual, it set before her a new cosmogony.

What a simple now-I-lay-me-down-to-sleep world she had stepped from, she thought, as she reckoned how all her life she had gone to bed, never with anything seriously worrying her or threatening her until a few weeks ago; what a world of romance and childish beliefs had been that centered about her room around the corner of the hall from mamma's and papa's; in that world, you thought of a good, able man wooing you to take you for wife, to work for you, win you a home, not at the start but yet eventually more prosperous than your father's; you thought of yourself winning "better" social position, your children — for in certain connections you imagined more than you yourself might carry out — becoming companions of children of people whom you had only begun to know; you fancied your husband becoming president, possibly of the United States or at least of a great Chicago railroad or bank or business corporation, and consequently you fancied yourself in the White House or with a great Lake Forest estate.

Then Marjorie remembered that her father had become president of a great corporation to-day; he could have his estate and perhaps would have been arranging for one now for her mother and her, if Doctor Grantham hadn't had a slow-thinking girl in his office the night Mrs. Russell telephoned for help; and she, Marjorie, would be with her mother, happily rushing off to Europe again or she would be at home in her room, dreaming of the dignity of the new Hale estate.

Would she exchange places with that girl she had been? She had told Gregg "no" even before she had left home and now, at the end of her first day as an inhabitant of the building, the number of which Mr. Dantwill had so emphatically leaded over, she cried to herself "no" again. Here she had come to escape her protected life, the life which all men she had known from Billy to Rinderfeld, and including even the casual Mr. Dantwill, had wished her to continue to know, and to know that alone. Of course, this first excursion from it had hurt her; but already she was liking the sting of her hurts; certainly she was not going to quit and run back because of them; no, what was unknown and forbidden to her she was to explore.

And already she found herself smiling at memory of herself with her best friend, Clara of Evanston, discussing what they had considered difficulties and what had formed for them "realities"; and she imagined Clara of Augusta and Clearedge Streets, overhearing them; and she tried to think what Clara would say. She went over to look down on Clara Selitz' face in sleep; beautiful it was; softer a little, but no less strong and resolute; she had to carry character with her all the time, that girl, Marjorie realized; and she had, till she had achieved what truthfully was a "fine" face;

it made insipid Marjorie's image of her friends' faces which she had called "fine." And she knew she had made no mistake in picking from that drug-store window, Clara Seeley.

Marjorie shivered and ceased regret for her lost world or perhaps — to borrow Gregg's phrase — her world which never was; and she returned to contemplation of Clara's with, not two sorts of men, but just one.

CHAPTER XX

UPON several occasions previous to the next day, Marjorie had approached strange men at their places of business and she had induced many of them to do what, proverbially, was most difficult for them; she made them give up good money for nothing tangible or visibly profitable to themselves; for Marjorie always had performed her part in the incessant "drives" for the Red Cross, the Salvation Army, the Russians, devastated France and the similar objects of emotion which, during the war and afterwards, had agitated Evanston. So, more than most girls of her position, she was accustomed to approach men. Of course, in her drives, she had unpleasant experiences when now and then she encountered a man who was "rude" to her; but never had rudeness taken a bolder form with Marjorie Hale than indifference to her or curtness in shutting off her solicitation. Occasionally she had been aware, when talking with tradesmen, that a man expected her to make some return for money contributed to her fund, — reward in the shape of patronage from the Hale family. No other sort of return could occur to her as expected by any man, because no other could possibly enter the heads of the men Marjorie Hale solicited. Consequently, she embarked upon wholly strange seas of experience with men in their business places when, upon the morning after her visit with Mr. Saltro to Sennen's Hall, she set out to earn

her living by the sale from shop to shop of Bostrock's Business Boosters.

These were advertising specialties of all sorts, from small, celluloid elephants bearing an inkwell and a shop's name imprinted, to souvenir card cases, calendars, paper monoplanes. More than a score of knick-knacks altogether composed the Bostrock "line," with which Marjorie had become acquainted by answering, in person, one of those advertisements of "Experience not essential to make good money selling proved, popular articles; call to-day; draw your pay to-morrow." She had called upon Mr. Bostrock while she still was an inhabitant of the big, protected home in Evanston; and though she gave her name as Conway and her address on Clearedge Street, and though she wore her plainest suit, and gloves and shoes which were not new, Bostrock immediately perceived her station. He was a keen-eyed, quick-talking, snap-judgment little fellow, Herman Bostrock, and not overpolite to the shabby ones in the line ahead of Marjorie who preceded her to the dingy rail of the office and thence on the other side to the seat beside Mr. Bostrock's desk. He did not permit them to sit, but passed them on and out, almost instantly, to the dusty flight of stairs down to Wells Street. But when Marjorie's turn came, he not only asked her to sit down but he himself arose, — a stubby, short-legged figure with patchy gray hair, grayish thin cheeks and loose lips stained with chewing tobacco.

"You mean to do business? You want to stick, if you make good? And you're going to try to make good?" Mr. Bostrock demanded of her, almost without break between his words, without stop between his questions.

When Marjorie assured him that she meant, wanted

and hoped, he clapped his hand down on his desk. "Done; I take you on." Evidently he prided himself on his snap judgments and made a point of them, though it was plain that he had not gained greatly in worldly goods by them. "References, I am sure, are satisfactory," he added, flatteringly. "Nevertheless, to keep our records complete, we must go through the form of asking for them."

"I'm afraid I can't give references," said Marjorie, frankly.

"In that case, when an applicant is otherwise satisfactory, we require a deposit of two dollars to cover cost of samples."

But when Marjorie promptly opened her hand bag, he more quickly shook his head. "I dispense with such needless routine in your case. Now, Miss Conway, here is our city territory not yet allocated." And, given a choice of six sections of Chicago and suburbs, she took for her own a long, triangular city "territory," in which she was to own the sole prerogative of visiting West Side auto dealers, bakers, bankers, barbers, butchers, chiropodists, churches, cleaners, confectioners, delicatessens, dentists, department stores, druggists and so on down Bostrock's alphabet of businesses to undertakers and wigmakers, in the interests of Bostrock's Business Boosters.

She laughed on her way home that day when she pictured herself peddling little celluloid elephants to a Swede delicatessen magnate on Milwaukee Avenue; but seriously she recognized she had a job in which, if she went at it with determination and humor, she could make good. She was on straight commission, twenty per cent. of the gross; that meant, if she sold ten dollars' worth of elephants, monoplanes and blot-

ters, she made two dollars; if she sold fifty dollars' worth, she earned ten. She ought to average five dollars a day, she figured; and she liked the idea of active work, in which she could utilize all her energy and have the fun of devising her own schemes for making sales; there was the element of attack and contest about it, too; and, in the territory which was to be hers, practically no chance of encountering Evanston acquaintances.

She tried to start at the actual offering of her wares, on this morning after her expedition with Mr. Saltro, in something of the spirit of sporting, half-humorous adventure in which she had carried her samples away from Bostrock's; but it proved an amazingly difficult feeling to summon when setting out from Clearedge Street.

She had breakfast, not in the big, cheerful, quiet dining room of home, but in a hot, noisy, smelly cafeteria; she was tired from last night; and that something which had been her peculiar possession — her conviction of innate superiority — was fled; and that something, which the other girls in the cafeteria possessed — confidence from experience in taking care of one's self — of course could not be hers. "Remember the American marines!" Clara encouraged her with a friendly grasp, when they parted on the corner where Marjorie took a street car. "Treat 'em all rough before they get a chance to rough you."

But Marjorie trembled too visibly to give even a good imitation of treating anybody rough when, after several counsels of her cowardice, she entered a small bank and began her business career. She made no sale but received such courteous treatment from a young man whom she approached that she agreed to come back

next month when the bank might be wanting something, and she immediately invaded a clothing store down the block; next a milliner's shop; next a restaurant; next a garage.

Men in business were a most mixed lot, Marjorie decided that evening on her way to Clearedge Street; but almost without exception her "prospects" had one common sort of astuteness; they could spot on sight that Miss Conway, representing Bostrock's Business Boosters, was a girl without a home and very recently cast upon her own and was without experience of the ways of the world; and, with few exceptions, they were surprisingly considerate of her; they took time from busy hours to give her advice and several asked her to consult them, if she encountered trouble; one, in addition, ordered three dollars' worth of printed blotters.

So Marjorie returned with sixty cents earned — not much less than her lunch money and carfare — and with her opinions about her "prospects" rather unsettled until she talked with Clara.

"Fresh guys!" judged Clara promptly. "That's the kind-a stuff they try to rope you in with. You didn't fall for it, did you? Forgot to tell you, kid. Look out for the old ones — especially the gray hairs — worse than the boys. One of your own age — well, sometimes, Marjorie; don't count on it; but sometimes you'll by accident stir up somethin' sportin' in one — but the old boys that go after girls — they ain't got a fair instinct left to 'em. Air! Marjorie, take the air when they're around. Say, now, where'll we step this eve?"

For Clara required to be always going somewhere; the population of the neighborhood demanded entertainment or excitement of some sort with a unanimity

and persistency amazing to Marjorie Hale, whom Evanston had considered a good deal of a goer. But, taken together, all the different social sets of Evanston, with which Marjorie Hale had become acquainted in ten years, did not on any night offer her the option in entertainment which Clara Seeley considered lay before her every night in the dance halls, gardens, hotels, rinks, chop-suey restaurants, movie theaters and the myriad other places of public entertainment in Chicago.

Marjorie Hale, with some of her friends, had descended from Evanston for various forays into the Green Mill, the Marigold and other gardens and into the marvelous motion picture palaces of this new uptown Chicago; but these visits had been excursions apart, and they held no place in the regular order of social activities advancing you from the association of families of less importance and prominence toward the ranks of the leaders. But here, with Clara, the places of public amusement created her world; with no need of sanction from anybody and with requirement of nothing more than a moderately decent dress and — usually — a male companion, a girl could go almost anywhere and have a wonderful time. And you had nothing to bother your mind as to whether attendance at this entertainment or at that would advance you most socially; for you weren't trying to advance anywhere; where you were, you had arrived; and all you had to worry about was how to buy yourself a new dress, when your present dancing gown ceased to be presentable, and how to keep yourself supplied with escorts who would pay for your entertainment and refreshment and demand of you only your company and friendship.

The ethics of the game, as Clara played it, required

a girl to buy her own clothes as scrupulously as she must always, under any circumstances, pay her own room rent; garments (except for a pair of silk stockings, perhaps, and except for gloves, of course) a good girl must not accept from a man; and there appeared to be a prevailing prejudice against letting a man pay your breakfast check. This prejudice was less strict in regard to luncheons and entirely ceased to operate in respect to dinners, particularly if the girl accepted a dance or a show afterwards. She was expected, of course, to permit a reasonable amount of petting; but then, if she accepted no more than dinner and a dance or a show, the account was squared; and every decent man, as every decent girl, must so consider it. Thus Clara managed to support herself as she did and have a "swell" time.

What became to Marjorie the most amazing and puzzling revelation from her inspection of this continual and elaborate social activity, was that Clara never seemed to have an idea of advancing anywhere beyond it.

"You mean don't I want more coin?" Clara inquired, when Marjorie tried to discuss it. "Sure, I'd like more; but you don't need to worry over fallin' on me makin' any mistakes about what a girl can get away with gettin' it."

"No; I don't mean just money," Marjorie attempted to explain. "Don't you want to get out of this way of living some day, Clara?"

"Into what?" demanded Clara, practically.

"Some place of your own where——" Marjorie continued vaguely, and Clara caught her up with sudden, surprising softness.

"I know; where you have kids. Sure, I want that; ever see a girl, who's any good, wouldn't like one? But what do you do to a kid, if you get 'em without marryin'; and what do you get yourself into if you do?"

"Do what?" asked Marjorie.

"Marry. The set-up on the other side of the sketch's got to be a man, hasn't he? A bird down at the Sunday Evening Club — I stepped in there once — said a mouthful about marriage. Said if marriage meant anything, it meant trust. Can you imagine me trustin' a man — one man — any man — after what I've seen? You seemed to been glimpsin' some unposed pictures of Mr. Man yourself, recently; what'd you think 'bout what you been seein' of the so-called human race?"

Marjorie did not tell, for she could not yet take her bitter thoughts lightly, like Clara, in these days when the vestiges of the privileges and the protection which had been hers in the big home in Evanston were vanishing and her struggles were beginning to mark Marjorie Conway, and when men, with eyes eager for such signs, were subtly or more openly watching the progress of discouragement of this gently reared girl who had been cast upon herself.

Nothing overt happened; but, in her rounds of business, tiny, almost indescribable things were done to try her; sometimes questions asked, proper in words, with a tone just off; sometimes a hand unnecessarily brushing hers or put over hers in the process of taking a sample from her fingers; often only the ogle of sensuous eyes. When she began to notice that the men who never subjected her to this were the poorer and "lower class" of the prospects she approached, and when she

commented on this hopefully to Clara, she promptly was supplied with a reason: "They ain't got the nerve; they see you ain't sunk to them yet. Watch 'em when a girl below 'em gets around. Dearie, don't buy yourself any bunk 'bout the superior virtues of the poor; I'm from 'em."

Of course, many men who considered themselves the equal or the superior of the agent for Bostrock's Business Boosters invariably met her either with impersonal indifference or with courteous consideration when she solicited orders from them; and then she would remember that her father invariably had seemed to her wholly impersonal or kindly considerate to girls in business, — until she found out about Sybil Russell.

How and where did her father and Mrs. Russell meet, she wondered. In his office? At a dance hall or cabaret? When at home she speculated about this, it had seemed to her an item of mere curiosity, but now it had become almost a fundamental question; and she needed to know about Mrs. Russell, much more. Gregg was right about that, she came to admit to herself; and she came to increasing and increasing desire to see Gregg and talk over everything with him, though she continued wholly to lack any longing for Billy. Partly, she supposed, this was due to her dread of the frightful emotional storm she was sure to be subjected to, when he found her; but partly also it was because she realized that, after it, she would be only worse off in mind and soul than before. And sometimes this struck her as particularly strange, because she thought she naturally would want, as offset to her present experiences, the companionship of a man who, though all the rest of the men in the world were polluted, would keep himself

clean. She found plenty of comfort in this certainty of his character; many and many a time when with men, or when listening to Clara's calm notations on life, Marjorie thought, "That may be true; but there's Billy. And if I know one like him there must be lots and lots of others." But she never mentioned him to Clara; what was the use?

She did guardedly mention Gregg; and Rinderfeld; and even her father, but without letting Clara suspect — she thought — that, in her pre-Clearedge Street days, she had been more than an acquaintance of Charles Hale, who was much in the newspapers now.

For the new president of Tri-Lake Products was doing big and spectacular things; he bought out a competitor whose mills had been shut down for six months and restarted with full force, working full time. Marjorie missed being "in" that triumph; she knew just how he had worked it, or would have worked it, if the home in Evanston had remained as it was. She with her mother, or alone, had been hostess of many big business parties — dinners, sometimes, when you had Martin order lots of heavy, meaty, men's food, with strong cheeses and stronger cigars and champagne, and big, ponderous unimportant men strutted in and overate, and little, insignificant looking, awfully important ones fiddled with the silver mostly; suppers, sometimes at midnight, when half a dozen men came back from the golf club; and then breakfast for them all the next morning at the house. And their talk; and father's talk. Oh, Marjorie missed that; and she tried to figure, from the accounts in the newspaper, just how he had worked this merger. At his clubs, mostly, she thought; but he had one dinner at home; and she wondered what

he was saying about her mother and about her. The only comment which she had seen in the papers was that she had sailed, with her mother, on the *Aquitania*. And of course she wondered most what he was thinking and feeling about her mother and about herself — and about Mrs. Russell.

CHAPTER XXI

HE, of course, was capable neither of thinking nor feeling the same constantly toward any one of them; for he was going through an upheaval, less consciously self-inflicted perhaps, but not for that less violent than Marjorie's; and his resultants confounded him far more than her discoveries confused her. For he had considered that he had taken thought and reckoned on the worst which could come, when he first took up his life with Sybil Russell. He had convinced himself that, even if the worst came, he would be chief sufferer and that he was not doing anything which cowardly endangered his wife and daughter more than himself. For he had figured that only two events were possible; either he would succeed in concealing the fact of his association with Mrs. Russell and so avoid harming any one else or he would fail and disgrace and scandal would come, but upon him, chiefly. Indeed, he had argued with himself that he would be not only the chief sufferer but, in a certain sense, the sole sufferer in this second case. For, though he realized that there must be a period of mental distress through which his wife and daughter must pass, he honestly believed that they would emerge from it much the same as before and with no final, irretrievable damage done them. Other women seemed about the same after a divorce, he observed; and their daughters held their position in society and married well.

For, if discovered, he expected to be divorced; he reckoned that, as the result of the scandal, he might be forced out of Tri-Lake, but he was wholly confident of his ability to obtain another position and make money. His wife certainly would claim alimony, and he always expected to pay it in sums sufficient to enable her and Marjorie to maintain the home; for he was not a man to consider escape from an obligation which he had assumed and never did he dream of repudiating his duty of supporting his wife and child.

He had imagined correspondence — formal, undoubtedly, but yet correspondence — passing between himself and his wife; he had fancied, even if the very worst came, that Marjorie would visit him sometimes, as he had fancied, when part of the worst actually had happened and she knew, that she would continue under his roof. How fatuous he had been! How he had hurt her more than ever he had imagined and far more than he had hurt himself. For, though he soon stilled his terrors that she had made away with herself, he never afterwards mistook the disaster to her from the blow he had struck her.

How he had undone, by that one blow, all that previously he had done for her since she was a pink baby just born; for from that moment when the nurse gave his child to his arms — indeed, from a time as much earlier as when he first learned from his wife that he was to have a child and he reckoned the even chances that it would be a daughter — he had adopted one consistent, unvarying attitude toward her, determining by all his powers to hold from her the unpleasant, the arduous, the perplexing and the ugly in life; to bring her to womanhood healthy, happy, graceful, cultured, honored, envied and all that a girl of any one's might

be. And he had about succeeded at that; she was honorably desired by a young man whom, if not a favorite with Charles Hale, any one would call a good match, and who was a clean, able fellow, certain to win great success and make with her an enviable home here in Evanston or in Lake Forest or Chicago.

Now he, her father, had destroyed all that for her, he knew; he had turned her face about from proceeding to her place in a home. If that might prove the most he had done to her, it might not be so bad; it might even, in the end, become a benefit to her — so he began to argue with himself.

He was feeling for compensations, for some way of believing that a good to his daughter might after all come out of this damage he had done; and he desperately required to convince himself that there might be compensations; so he thought:

"She was a fine, able girl; she had any amount of promise; she might do anything! Yet how many fine, able girls with any amount of promise you see in all the homes like mine along the north shore and down into the city. And how few, how very, very few, of the women you see in those homes, amount to a hill of beans. How futile and inane they all are, doing nothing; phantom things, that's all. Phantom tasks, phantom labors, that's all they perform, for the phantom triumphs of overcoming them — unless they've given up even the pretense of usefulness and go in for bridge and gadding. Ninnies!" he said that aloud to himself. "Ninnies!"

Then he more vigorously reacted; Marjorie had disappeared, as she had, partly to frighten and punish him; and he would not be frightened, particularly after he learned from a letter written on the boat by his wife

and sent back by the pilot that she had received a telegram from Marjorie at sailing. And he ascertained also that Marjorie had withdrawn from the savings bank the money of her own which had formed her legacy from grandmother Winfield. He knew, therefore, that she had with her, or more likely had on deposit in some other bank under another name, at least five hundred dollars.

When it became necessary for him to explain her absence to the family friends, who knew she had not accompanied Mrs. Hale, he said that Marjorie had preferred an adventure of her own to again traveling in a routine way with her mother. He gave the impression that he had known of Marjorie's plan and approved of it, but that his wife, being more formal minded, would not approve. He repeated, what he found to be the fact, that Marjorie was writing her mother as though she were at home; and he suggested that his wife's friends refrain from disturbing Mrs. Hale by mentioning in letters that Marjorie actually was not at home.

As a matter of fact, Corinna Hale had few friends with whom she kept up any sort of correspondence; and none of these cared to intrude openly upon her personal affairs. Something was wrong in the Hale family, people began to realize; it might blow over, or it might not; Mrs. Hale's absence in England might have more significance than her previous sojourns abroad; or she might return, serene and calm, to resume her place in the big, white home. Neighbors gossiped, of course; but Charles Hale was president of Tri-Lake Products and Materials Corporation; conspicuously he abode in his own home, as he had upon previous occasions when his wife and daughter were away; and men

of first importance in Chicago and Detroit and Cleveland, and not a few of influence even in New York, visited him, and dined him at their homes, at hotels and clubs. For he was a bigger man than ever and, in times which dismayed little men, he put in operation big projects.

Physically he was himself again; indeed, he seemed improved, if anything, in tone and steadiness and color by the weeks of enforced rest during his recuperation. His eyes were clear, his hair regained luster; he stood and walked straight as before, with that something new, in addition to the sense of power which he previously possessed, which the acknowledgment of power gives a man. And where he walked, women raised their eyes and gazed at him. When his down town meetings with men were over and he returned to his home, or when, after he had entertained at home, the last guest was gone, Hale ascended to his room and sat around, smoking usually and half undressed, for a long time before going to bed. He never, on these occasions, wandered into his wife's room, but remained in his bedroom or in his dressing room; in the dark, he would stand sometimes with a window curtain raised and look in the direction where Sybil Russell lay. For, though several times he had spoken with her by telephone, he had not yet seen her.

He had no idea that he was about to see her; indeed, she was not in his mind at all at this particular hour of the evening when he was passing through the general dining room of one of the hotels down town, to a table reserved for him and several other men. And there she sat at a small table alone, close to the route he naturally would follow from the door to his table.

Apparently she did not see him when he entered; she

was seated so that he caught glimpse of her profile first, — the fine, even lines of her brow and nose and lips, the pleasing turn of her chin, the alluring curve of her neck and the round of her breast. She held one hand in her lap; with the other she touched a spoon and weighed it, pensively, in her slender, white, sensitive fingers. She did not play with the spoon; she hardly lifted it at all, but as it was the only motion she made, it drew his attention, especially as she gazed at the little silver thing musingly. It was as if he had surprised her, all alone and off guard in reverie. She had no food before her; likely, he thought, as the swift processes of his mind swept through the trifles as well as through that which was tremendous to him, likely she had ordered and the waiter not yet had returned.

His eyes rested on her fingers; and his sight seemed to supply him with tactual sensation of her fingers clasping his as he clasped her hand; then he seemed to feel her hand softly but so intensely touching his face. His eyes traveled up her white forearm; they lifted to her face and she slowly turned her head and glanced up, quietly, calmly — oh, so like her to show herself so calm — but he knew what passion she had underneath! She met his eyes and recognized him, but no one, except himself, would have known it. He hardly would have been sure of it, if he had not been staring straight into her eyes; for they alone gave any sign. She did not gasp or quicken at all the even rise and fall of her bosom; she did not start or even let slip the spoon lightly held in her fingers; no flush flamed up. She was without rouge, as always she had been, and therefore among other women she appeared slightly pale; he always liked that; her hair was dressed almost demurely; he preferred that; she wore a simple dinner

gown of blue — his favorite color — and more modest than any other woman's. And at that instant Charles Hale, if he could have summoned the power, would have banished all others throughout that wide room and drawn the walls close to confine him and her together. But he could not speak to her; he could not even stop or delay in passing her; for she forbade it. The pupils of her eyes, when they directly met his, dilated; she could not control that; perhaps she did not wish to; then she looked down again at the spoon thoughtfully, as though nothing had happened. And he had to pass on.

Fortunately, he was the last of the group on the way to his table; so none of his companions could have noticed any emotion he betrayed. At the table, he chose for himself a seat from which he could watch her without making it conspicuous, and his attention was very intermittently on business that hour. He suddenly loathed the stupid, heavy talk; he hated the mass of solid, meaty dishes before him; suddenly he longed for a woman's voice, — light, fond, tantalizing, dissembling, passionate; to have before him woman's dishes, delicate, dainty, tempting, not filling and dulling to other sensations. Sybil Russell received her order, and he could watch, from his distance, her restrained, slight motions as she was served; and the sight of her so near, and yet so shut away, inflamed him. Was she here by mere chance, he wondered. If so, what a woman to meet him as she had; what a woman to achieve such restraint, even if she were here by design, having learned that he was to dine here this night. It must be, he realized, that she had come to see him — and show herself to him — from refusal longer to bear

separation from him. And how she had shown it for him, and only him, to see!

"You're mine!" he said to himself, with deep stirrings, as he glanced across at her; and he admired her more that never once he caught her glancing at him. "Wasting your time," he continued to himself with profound satisfaction, as he followed the turn of other men's eyes to her. "She's mine!"

After a while she arose and, moving in just the way he knew she would — with a slight toss of her head, her hand held a little lifted at her side, with more life in her stride than its seeming slowness disclosed, with other little characteristics which cried her to him — she left the room. And there he had to sit, breathing smoke of strong cigars, with cheese and hard, half-blackened crackers before him and listening to figures and estimates of costs and taxes.

About half-past nine, when he succeeded in getting away from the men, he did not go home; nor did he go to a club. He wandered into another hotel where he was not likely to encounter even an acquaintance, and he sat down, sullen from his loneliness and his desire. He lit a cigar and almost instantly threw it away and arose and sat in another room, stirring himself to review the disregard and neglect shown him by his wife. Now she was gone away again, satisfied — more than satisfied; indeed, she preferred to be far off, spending money he earned and without considering any duty she owed him.

Of course, he never demanded duty from her; he always — thank God — had been too proud for that. If she did not want to remain close to him, let her go! Obviously, it meant that she did not love him; any woman who loved a man would never dream of desert-

ing him at a time like this — at the great hour of his triumph, to leave him alone!

He accused himself not at all for this desertion by her; he knew she was wholly ignorant of his unfaithfulness. No, so far as she could know, he was faithful to her as he had been faithful and kept himself faithful to her, by God, during the long, lonely, totally unjustified periods of her first desertions of him. Not many men — he told himself — would have endured that as long as he had; they would have done as he had or got a divorce.

He would have proceeded about a divorce, if that really had been the kinder alternative for him to take; but he had argued that it was not the kinder, even when considering solely his wife. For as his wife, in the relation which she maintained to him in these last years, she was thoroughly happy; she was getting what she wanted out of life — and from him, he considered bitterly. She always had got just what she wanted out of their marriage; from the very first, when she, so cool, so sure of herself, so provoking of his passions, had drawn him and known that she had him, she had let him win her because she intended to obtain, through him, just exactly what she wanted; and she had obtained it.

And he had been glad to give it to her; for he liked position, too, of course; he liked money and influence; but also he wanted, and had right to expect of her, more than that, while she — well, she seemed actually able to call it being a man's wife to bear his name proudly (for she undoubtedly was proud of him), to spend his money and do herself and him credit by the way she gained place in the world for Mrs. Charles Hale. He was proud of her for that; but pride in

his mate was no substitute to him for love and passion. However, she could never understand that; what outrage she would feel — and what contempt for him — if he had told her that he, a matured man with a grown daughter, required passion still. So he had sought and found passion elsewhere; leaving his wife to continue going her own way, serene and perfectly satisfied with what she had. Consequently, so far as his wife was concerned, he had convinced himself he had done right; and what was right before, was right now — except that his daughter had become involved in a disconcerting way.

But it angered him, at this moment, when he thought of Marjorie's interference with him; her attempt at dictation to him; her disappearance to intimidate him. Women passed near him, — a woman suggestive, slightly, of Sybil Russell; women gazed at him and lowered their eyes. He was attractive to women, though they did not know who he was; and this was the time of his triumph, and his wife had left him to be alone. But he need not be alone. A woman — his woman — was awaiting him, he was sure. Not on Clearedge Street in that apartment where he had been shot and his daughter had come; but at another place they had used once. The thought of it roused him; was she there?

He arose and entered a telephone booth and called that number; she was there.

About two o'clock in the morning he reached his home, which was quiet, of course, and dark except for the night light left for him; and except for the servants, it was empty. It made him feel jumpy to-night, this deserted house of his, in his let-down reaction; and as

he made a turn through the lower rooms, following an old instinct to see that everything was right, which was a relic of his days before he had a man to lock up at night, he imagined he heard a step in his daughter's room. Had Marjorie come home? What a time for her to have come! How could he face her?

He listened for several moments; then, hearing nothing, he ascended and, after listening again, he proceeded to her door, knocked and, receiving no answer, opened the door and entered.

The stillness of the room sent a shrinking through him; of course, it had been still many times before when Marjorie was away and, of course, it had been still ever since she left that note to him and abandoned him; but never till this instant had he felt it dead like this. Never had he felt how finally she was gone — gone from him not to come back; gone was his wife; gone forever from his home the quick young voices of Marjorie's and his friends; for he had made them his friends, those boys and girls who had come here. And Charles Hale had never in his pre-accountings with himself reckoned on loss of quite all this. How gone, gone the whole home was. And what was happening to Marjorie? In what strange, particular danger might she be in this moment of this night? It frightened him, set him jumpy again and overcome again with guilt. It seemed to him that this night he had again definitely imperilled his daughter.

When he went to his own room, he found a memorandum left by Martin stating that Mr. Whittaker had telephoned during the evening and left his name. This was mere routine, for Billy telephoned for news of Marjorie every evening. It annoyed Hale, particularly when he happened to answer the telephone when

Billy was calling; but Whittaker's extreme attitude did not disturb Hale as much as Gregg's slight change of manner with him; for he knew that Billy condemned him wholesale for his affair with Mrs. Russell, and Billy scarcely could feel added abomination of him because he had hurt his daughter, but Gregg's different attitude was because of Marjorie. Hale did not mind meeting Billy on the street or Stanway or any one else who knew, but he could not comfortably think about Gregg, particularly when he heard from Rinderfeld that Gregg had lost his position and was unsuccessfully seeking another.

CHAPTER XXII

GREGG'S business misfortune had occurred several days before; but although many people knew of it, Gregg did not mention it to Bill until a couple of days later than this, as he wanted to save a bit of news as useful for cheering Bill, as that was sure to be, for a particularly depressed occasion. No time with Bill was exactly a cheery one, in these days; yet some evenings found him nearer bottom than others; so when Gregg came into the flat after supper one night and discovered Billy lying motionless on his back on the couch and gazing hopelessly at the ceiling, Gregg tossed his hat away and took a seat just out of the glare of the reading lamp which was uselessly burning.

"Lost your job, Bill?" he suggested quietly; and when Billy paid not the slightest attention, he repeated it patiently until Billy demanded, "What in the world are you talking about?"

"Lost your job, I said," Gregg informed him.

"How could I lose my job?" Billy returned.

"Oh, it can be done," Gregg said cheerfully. "If you're no good at it, there's others that are; lots of others these days. I've done it myself."

"Done what?"

"Lost my job."

Billy slowly turned toward Gregg. "They let you out, you mean?"

"You've guessed it."

"Why?"

"Wasn't earning check-room costs on my hat."

"Why weren't you?"

Gregg shook his head; no more with Billy than with Mrs. Russell would he take refuge in generalities on business conditions.

"You know perfectly well why they let you out!" Billy charged him, becoming interested. "You're not a salesman; you never have been; you're just a good-looking, pleasant person, Gregg; that's your advantage and your curse. I've always told you that. Now maybe you'll believe me and get to work."

"Where?"

"What did you say?"

"Where'll I get to work?"

"Why? Can't you get a job now? What's happened to your friend Hartford and the others who were so crazy to get you a couple of months ago?"

"A couple of months ago, everybody seemed to think that all that was needed to buck up business again and put it at its peak was a cheerful disposition," Gregg said feelingly. "I had that; I still have — most of it; but — well, Hartford's not putting his carburetor on the market at all this year. Banks won't back him; and even he admits it's a rotten time. Everybody all of a sudden started telling me it's a rotten time — to put me on the payroll, at any rate. And since last week Thursday I've seen 'em all — everybody who's ever bunked himself that he wanted me to work for him. I'd have mentioned it to you before, but I knew you're never very interested in partial returns; but every precinct's heard from now, Bill; and it's a landslide."

"Because every one that knows you," said Billy

deliberately, "knows that you've never really worked. Do you want really to work now?"

"No," said Gregg, without taking offense. "I wouldn't go so far as to claim that; but I certainly need to go on drawing pay for the so-called activities which I've been palming off as work."

Billy tossed up his hand in the vehemence of his disgust.

"To mention a few reasons," Gregg went on cheerfully, "not in the order of their moral importance, Bill, but simply as they occur to me in order of inconvenience; bank balance; I'm overdrawn."

"Hummp," said Bill.

"I owe my normal amount of money."

"Including the mortgage on your car?"

"Thanks," said Gregg. "I was forgetting that; thirteen or fourteen hundred more. Oh, look here Bill; I do know the exact amount of the principal — twelve hundred fifty; but I haven't doped the interest. Then I'm rather above normal in the amount I'm back with you in our costs here; ain't I, Bill? Exactly how much?"

Billy faced about with his broad, red face flushing. "You know I'd never bother you about that, Gregg! That's all right," he cried, in one of his sudden somersaults into emotion. "As long as I have a room or a meal, you have half, Gregg; you don't owe me a red cent and you never can!" And he got up and grabbed Gregg's arm and squeezed it.

"The devil I don't and I can't," Gregg acknowledged, unbeautifully; Bill meant it, he knew; and there was warmth about Bill, when he felt like this, which made Gregg glow and almost made him show how he felt about Bill. But that would be maudlin, Gregg said

to himself; maudlin. Yet it had been a particularly unpleasant, lonely week for Gregg, so here, with Bill's arm about him, he had deliberately to check himself from thinking about Bill; which he did by remembering Marjorie. And, at the same moment, Bill remembered her and drew away his arm.

"Oh, what're we talking about money for, when Marjorie's gone and no one knows where she is!"

"Yes; some one knows," Gregg said to him. Partly the admission was the result of his feeling for Bill, he realized instantly; but not entirely that; for he had decided with himself a few days ago that, unless some word came from Marjorie, soon Bill must know all that he did.

"What?" Bill grabbed him with both hands. "What did you say?"

"Rinderfeld knows, Bill," Gregg said, deciding to give it him all at once. "He's had her address since the first."

"Rinderfeld? How? — Where is she, Gregg?"

"I don't know."

But Billy gripped him only harder and accused. "You knew where she is and you could sit here and talk to me ——"

Gregg stopped him. "I don't know where she is or anything about her but that Rinderfeld, I am sure, has her address."

"Oh!" Billy gasped in his confusion. "He's found her, has he?"

"Marjorie left her address with Rinderfeld when she went away," Gregg informed directly.

"What? When did you find that out?"

"I've known it all along," Gregg confessed. "Ever since she went away. In fact, she told me the last

night I saw her, about a week before she went, that she was going, and no one would have her address but Rinderfeld." And Gregg related some of the circumstances, but recognized that Bill, for a few moments, actually considered him crazy; or else Marjorie must have become touched with madness, her troubles must have turned her mind. It took several minutes for Bill even to begin to comprehend, and then all that he seized was the fact that Marjorie deliberately and premeditatedly had planned to sever all connection with her family and friends except through Rinderfeld. Furiously, then, Bill accused Gregg for keeping this from him.

"How you could live in this flat with me! How you could see me every day, night and morning, Gregg! How you could sit down and talk over with me what might have happened to her; how you could have watched me walk the streets, looking for her, hoping for her, praying for her; and you knew that all along and did not tell me! How ——" Billy assailed him between attempts to get Rinderfeld on the telephone; for Rinderfeld's home number was reported busy and his office did not answer.

Most of it Gregg took in silence, though now and then a remark from Bill goaded out something like, "Bill, I've walked the streets hoping for her, too."

Rinderfeld's home number answered; Mr. Rinderfeld was not in; but the girl would communicate with him at once. Billy requested and then demanded to know where he was; but Rinderfeld had no simpleton taking his calls. The girl took Mr. Whittaker's number and she presumed Mr. Rinderfeld would call Mr. Whittaker.

Rinderfeld did so in less than five minutes; and before the end of one more, Rinderfield hung up. Billy

tried to trace the 'phone Rinderfeld called from but got no information.

"He's home!" Billy charged in one impulse; then, "He might be with Marjorie now!" Billy snatched his hat and stick from the closet; but, not really believing Rinderfeld home, he went back in his impotent fury to Gregg. "What did you keep that to yourself for?"

And Gregg still managed to restrain himself. To have told how Marjorie had taken him into her heart that evening when — before he, in turn, offended her — she had protested against the inability of Billy to aid her; to have claimed the information she gave as a secret between her and himself, a confidence which she assumed he would keep and keep particularly from the man most bound to prevent her plan; anything like that would surely make matters worse; so Gregg rejoined only, "You'll get no more change out of Rinderfield than you got over the 'phone. I've seen him, of course. He says, what he's been telling you, that until his client, who in this respect now is Marjorie, wishes her address given, he can not supply it. She does not wish it; and she doesn't reply to letters yet. Of course I've tried."

But that made matters worse. "You haven't given me even a chance to try. I could have written her long ago! I could have made her reply; or made Rinderfeld lead me to her! You — you!" Billy was beside himself now. "You didn't want me to try; you wanted to keep her to yourself. That's why you tell me now, after you've found you can't do anything. You knew she was going, when you could have stopped her — or I could — because you wanted her to go so you could get her from me; you ——" he thrust, breathless, before Gregg, who went white, believing at that instant

that Bill meant to attack him. The muscles throughout him tugged and appeared to tighten, but Gregg kept himself down while he stood still, relaxed, before Bill.

"All right, Bill," he managed after a moment. "If that's what you want to believe, go to it." And he turned and went to the window where the shade had been left up; Billy did not follow him nor did Bill speak to him again. Bill went out and when Gregg felt the slam of the closed door, he shook and could not quickly check his shaking; for he knew he had lost Bill, since Bill would never forgive him and he realized that he had helped neither Bill nor Marjorie nor any one else.

And he went weak and sick with fear for Marjorie. Suppose Bill was right! Suppose she couldn't take care of herself — wherever she was. Suppose frightful, unthinkable things were happening to her this instant; or had happened; or would before — before what? He did not know what was to be the end. He had supposed that some day, soon, Marjorie would send for Bill and him; or at least let them know how she was and what she was doing. When she had not, did that mean she had got into more than she bargained and that —— Gregg's fears, after this combat with Bill, led him on and on into dismay. Then he began to get himself together; he should not have done more to prevent Marjorie, he argued with himself; she had been bound to do what she had and interference would have had the effect only of driving her to more desperate means, perhaps; she had been determined to discover and scrutinize life which she did not know, and she would come through safe, he believed; and the better and nobler and greater for it. But, could he be sure?

A little before midnight, Billy returned, having waited at Rinderfeld's apartment until Rinderfeld appeared; and though Billy evidently had threatened physical violence, he had go no "change" out of Rinderfeld; yet, before coming home, Billy had accomplished something by rousing out of bed the head of the most reliable private detective agency in Chicago and employing service which guaranteed that one competent operative would constantly watch Rinderfeld and report his movements and particularly inform William Whittaker instantly when Rinderfeld was found in the company of a certain girl of twenty-two who was described.

It was as a result of this stratagem that, about eight o'clock in the evening of the sixth day later, William Whittaker, who then was alone in his apartment on East Pearson Street, received word that Rinderfeld was in the company of a girl, whom the operative believed the one described, and that she was dining with Rinderfeld and another man and a girl at a certain restaurant on the North Side. So it was that Billy set out and, arriving at the restaurant named, he found there, with Rinderfeld and two others, Marjorie.

CHAPTER XXIV

MARJORIE had no warning of his arrival; indeed at this time she was without apprehension of the presence of any one belonging to her Evanston acquaintance; for the weeks which had passed since her abandonment of her father's home had emphasized to her the astonishing narrowness and paucity of the paths through the city which are trod by people concerning themselves chiefly with appearances for social position. She reckoned that they considered — for she had merely to count that she herself had once considered — hardly a score of public places as advantageous for them to visit; besides these, there were perhaps six or eight gardens and cabarets which were pleasantly "unusual" or attractively risqué for an adventurous evening; also there were the resorts where boys and men, from the better sections of the city and suburbs, went for frankly sensual companionship. But they seemed to know nothing of the great number of places which provided Jake Saltro and Sam Troufrie and Clara Seeley and their friends with food and entertainment.

Surprisingly attractive and bright Marjorie found these hitherto unsuspected places of dining and amusement; here she was to-night with Clara and Sam and Mr. Rinderfeld at a restaurant quite as well arranged and decorated and furnished as many a fashionable hotel dining room, and it was blest by a rather better than usual cook with an especially happy penchant for

sea foods and salads and pastries; there was an extraordinary musical trio, — a Heifetz-looking violin youth accompanied by two girls who played, sang, dialogued or danced, and who, with the soulful violinist, jazzed zestfully for the dancing of the patrons in the cleared space at the center of the floor.

Marjorie knew a good many of the couples at the other tables or dancing; there was Red Else Nordquist making motions with his fiery head meaning, "on for toddle pretty soon?" Red Else considered himself in the real-estate business, having a father who was a carpenter and had slapped up a block of flats on first and second mortgage money just before the war; Red got his, now, from the rents. Gus Linduska gazed Clara's and Marjorie's way, too often for Mil Kotopoulos, who was with him. Mil was an old friend of Clara's; they'd worked in the same manicure shop; she was changing her hair, letting it go back to brown, but she wasn't changing her friends, though her father was bootlegging now and cleaning up — some said — three thousand a month. Winking to a waiter in the manner which meant "yes; cocktails in the coffee cups" was Max Kral, credit clothing, who wasn't one of those caught with a big inventory when prices broke; Mrs. Kral was with him and the Sequieras, credit jewelry, whose seven-thousand-dollar car, brand new and with chauffeur, waited outside; Marjorie could hear them, as they meant her to, when they mentioned the car by name and by price, with chauffeur; Ig Kostic, the Serbian undertaker, with "Krazy Kat" Fiala, Mat Jilek, of the chain stores, and Vittie (Vittoria) Garibaldi — Marjorie, in her mind, ran over the names of the people who nodded to her and whom she could nod to, all of them dining from the card and at a cost of

two dollars each and upwards, according to how often you winked; and their cars, with or without chauffeurs, crowded the parking stalls.

Of course Marjorie Hale, in her Evanston days, occasionally must have seen some of these people when boldly and with elaborate affront they invaded the hotels which the Sedgwicks, the Chadens, the Lovells, the Cleves, the Vanes and the Hales frequented but, when she noticed these intruders at all, it was rather with amusement or at least with condescension, and she imagined them lucky individuals from the new immigrants who, by extraordinary personal sacrifices or by isolated strokes of fortune, had got together a little money which they were half ridiculously, half pitifully parading. But she had completely cured herself of any comforting fancy of the fewness of these people and, as completely, she had lost any lingering feeling of condescension. As they became her friends, she still could not help being amused at things they did; but with her amusement and with her real liking for many of them there grew, in these days, respect and something beyond that which bordered on fear.

Fear of what? She wondered sometimes; not fear for herself, directly; rather, fear for hers. Her what? For Evanston, she said to herself; for Winnetka and Lake Forest and that north shore which was the stronghold of the life which had been hers; for the Lake Shore Drive and Astor Street and the avenues and places between them; for the Drake and the Blackstone and the clubs, — the pleasant, privileged places where her sort ruled. Sometimes she felt the presence of these new people as a pressure upon hers.

"They're taking over Chicago from you," Rinderfeld once commented calmly to her, "as we are taking

over New York from you and the run-down Dutch. The Anglo-Saxon stock in America that sticks to its stock is almost through. It's going down and going under or it's gone up and —— "

"And what?" she urged him, when he stopped.

"Diminishes," said Rinderfeld quietly, choosing, as he always did, the least offensive word and adding, as he liked to, the flourish, "Here about us are those who are taking over American civilization."

They had not been in this restaurant then but in another very like it; and Clara and Sam Troufrie had not been with them, as now. They had been alone, Marjorie Hale and Felix Rinderfeld, on the occasion of his second call upon her after she had taken a room at Jen Cordeen's. That second visit was of his own initiative but the first had been of hers; for Rinderfeld had possessed the restraint and perception to wait until she sent for him. Of course, he knew she was bound to summon him, sooner or later, since he composed the sole connection she retained with the world which had been hers.

He had been wholly careful to preserve the impersonal in that first business interview since she had left her home; and in the second, when he sought her with a most plausible business excuse, he had let himself relax from the formal less than she.

For Marjorie was hungry for personal details, for the tiny, tremendously significant trifles about her father who was doing big things again and whom Rinderfeld was seeing and she never; and when she had learned all she could of her personal matter, she questioned him about more general affairs; and Rinderfeld replied to her, luring her on. On into the most subtle and subversive activity of mankind, — the use

of the mind. For Felix Rinderfeld discerned with complete clarity the basis of his hold on her; here was a girl with an excellent mind — one capable actually of ruling her — but a girl reared under conditions which had required no exercise of it, which, in fact, had practically forbidden its use; and when all of a sudden she had been brought with frightful shock against a reality which she had to combat with her mind, Felix Rinderfeld had gained the golden opportunity of guiding her in her first experiments with thought.

But neither at the time when she sent for him nor upon the following days when he came to talk with her had he erred by betraying the slightest physical feeling for her; Gregg Mowbry only, at one accidental moment when he caught Rinderfeld off guard, had surprised a glimpse of that. Clara warned Marjorie against Rinderfeld, of course, but Clara cautioned against every man and, to tell the truth, when Clara learned who Marjorie's friend was, she was less uneasy about him. "He's no boob; he knows he's got a shady rep, professionally, and if he queers himself personal, he knows he's cooked," Clara admitted and observed with increasing curiosity the peculiar plays that Rinderfeld made for Marjorie's attention.

For instance: "What do you suppose he picked as light reading to slip a girl?" Clara discussed the puzzle with Sam. "Wells' 'Outline of History' — at ten dollars the throw." Clara dipped into it, suspiciously, half expecting it might be a trick book, and she was disappointed, of course, and then got astoundingly interested and she read it, with Marjorie, late at night after they went to bed. For Marjorie also surprised herself by her interest. At home her mother had had the books, but Marjorie had never opened

them; however, at Jen Cordeen's, she wanted to read them; and Rinderfeld told her why.

"You're realizing that what you'd been standing on — and what's been knocked from under you — was not merely an illusion concerning one man but a fallacy regarding your whole situation; so you need now to know more about what the human race actually is and has been."

"What was my fallacy?" Marjorie asked.

But Rinderfeld refused the attempt to phrase it; and thereby kept her thinking for herself and of him.

She was not actually discussing history with Rinderfeld when Billy came upon them, but their discussion was at least more mental and impersonal than any she had ever had with Bill; however, this probably was not apparent.

Clara saw Billy first and, of course, did not recognize him. "Hello!" Clara warned in hoarse *sotto voce*. "The place is pinched!"

Rinderfeld looked about, then, and instantly recognized William Whittaker; and simultaneously Rinderfeld grasped the inevitable developments of the next moment; he thought so quickly, indeed, that his impulse to be on his feet got no further than a tugging at his knee muscles.

"Whittaker is here," he said quickly in a low voice to Marjorie. "He has seen you; keep your seat."

She jerked and pulled herself up straight, swung about and saw Billy; as she faced about, he cried her name, "Marjorie!"

But she had no regard for the commotion he caused; she was not able to think about other people; they might have been, for those seconds, blotted out and the room blotted out, as Billy approached her; here

he was, rushing toward her, — Billy who believed he had owned her, who could think of her in no way but as his.

"Oh, I get it," Marjorie heard Clara's voice, correcting her first comment on Billy's entrance. "He's a friend of yours."

Marjorie appealed to Rinderfeld, but never taking her eyes off Billy. "You've got to help me, I guess."

"Yes; humor him," said Rinderfeld steadily. "Don't try to run, whatever you do."

"No," said Marjorie; and she was aware that Rinderfeld was motioning to some one — to whom and for what purpose, she did not see. There was a wholeness of forgetfulness of himself about Billy, a blindness and deafness and selflessness of joy and relief at his having found her which, for that moment, made her unable to feel the presence of any one else. No one but Billy could have put himself under so; and she had forgotten how he could, for her. He called her name again; and she whispered in dismay to herself, "Billy, oh, Billy." Then she went weaker and shrank. "How can he possibly, possibly understand?" And though at one instant she would have risen and cried out to the staring, smiling men and girls about that this man who so burst in was coming for her and coming so because he could not care for himself at all in comparison with her, and there was no other man like him, yet at the next instant she would have hidden from him, if she could. Not because she was ashamed before him or for him before them, but because she had nothing for him; when he reached her, she could only sit there.

And now he reached her. "Marjorie, Marjorie!"

"Billy," she said. "Sit down."

For Rinderfeld was on his feet now; Sam Troufrie also was standing.

"Marjorie, come!" said Billy. "I've found you — don't you know. Come — come with me!"

She sat there, staring up at him but not even raising an arm. Rinderfeld spoke to him now, but Billy paid no attention at all to Rinderfeld; Billy's hands seized her, her shoulders felt his fingers; his face came close to hers for he dropped to one knee beside her chair, holding her and shaking her a little as though, when she stared at him, she was asleep and he had to wake her.

"What have they been doing to you, Marjorie?" Still gripping her, he turned on Rinderfeld and in a whisper but savagely he said, "What have you done to her?"

Then other hands seized Billy; not Rinderfeld's. Waiters and the manager of the restaurant were around Billy.

"Don't hurt him!" Marjorie cried.

"Hurt me?" said Billy; and he laughed and let her go and straightened and threw one man down.

"We're going into the manager's room," Rinderfeld said quickly; and she got up and he led her, with Billy and the manager and the waiters crowding after them.

They all pushed into the room but only Billy and she and Rinderfeld stayed there; the rest got out, or Rinderfeld started them out and Billy finished the getting rid of them. He grabbed at Rinderfeld, too. "You get out of here now!"

Marjorie recovered herself at that. "Billy, you must control yourself!"

"What am I doing?" he swung toward her. "You want him here?"

"Yes."

"What? Oh, maybe I do, too; he might get away altogether; and if you've hurt her ——" he was threatening Rinderfeld again.

"Be still, Billy," Marjorie begged. "You shan't say such things. Mr. Rinderfeld's never hurt me; he wouldn't dream of doing to me what you, yourself, have just done!"

"I?"

"Oh, I felt the fineness of it, too, Billy; I felt what you meant to be the fineness of it — your coming to find me that way to — to save me. But do you think, when you do a thing like that and when you say a thing like this against Mr. Rinderfeld, it's not — also an insult to me? You're wrong and unjust and insulting to him ——"

"Insulting to him!" Billy repeated and laughed. "Insulting to Felix Rinderfeld!"

"You shan't!" she denied. "You shan't. Mr. Rinderfeld never came into my trouble of his own accord; we asked him to help me — you and Gregg and I. I went to him to have him help me, and he has helped me more than any one else, more than ever you have and in a way which should make you ashamed — ashamed of yourself for what you think and say of him and me. I didn't imagine a man could be as unpersonal and considerate of a girl in my situation as he has been. I thank him for it; I haven't been able to thank him before; he wouldn't have let me; so I thank him for it now!"

Rinderfeld moved then; he had not moved when Billy reached for him or when Marjorie first defended him;

she had not looked at him when she began but now she saw him. What had she said? she demanded of herself in fright. Exactly what had she said? More than she realized, undoubtedly; or else a decent, fair word spoken for him was so rare and surprising an event for Felix Rinderfeld that it affected him out of proportion to her intent. She had never seen Rinderfeld affected by anything before; so unpersonal, indeed, had he kept himself that she had never thought of him as possessing and controlling sensitiveness like other men; but here, by her word for him, she had unmasked him a man, eager for approbation — not scorning it — hungry for warmth and sympathy, not contemptuous of it, and a man yearning for affection from her.

Affection? It frightened her even to form the idea in her own head; yet she meant every word she had spoken and she would not have taken them back; they were true and deserved. Felix Rinderfeld had played fair with her from the first; and she could not imagine him going on with her except playing fair; and she would play fair with him.

"I think my presence does not help your talk with him," Rinderfeld said to her quietly, and it struck her as his characteristic refusal to take personal advantage from her. "I shall wait for you outside to take you home; or I shall go now myself, whichever you prefer."

"I think," said Marjorie, and she faced him, alternately white and overswept with flushes, she was aware, "I will take him to Clearedge Street. I meant what I said a minute ago."

"Thank you," said Rinderfeld, barely audibly; he glanced at Billy and hesitated but decided not to speak to him at all. Rinderfeld opened the door to the res-

taurant floor where dance music again was playing. When he was gone, Billy advanced and seized Marjorie's arm. A waiter or some one must have carried her gloves and handbag from the table where she had been dining; anyway, here they were on a chair.

"These are yours?" said Billy.

She nodded and he swept them up and led her out through the door to the sidewalk and around to his car.

"Get in," he ordered her.

No one outside noticed them; if any of those who had witnessed Billy's coming were waiting further developments, they must be on watch inside; but there were people passing and there was a policeman on the corner who, of course, would take the side of a girl against a man trying to force her to accompany him in a car. Marjorie thought of these, and she brought them to Billy's mind when she said, "I will go with you, if you will take me home."

"Where's your home?" he returned. "I want to see it." Then definitely he agreed. "Yes; I'll take you there."

So she got in and gave him Jen Cordeen's number on Clearedge Street. The repetition of the address stiffened his clasp on her arm, for after he had her in the car, he held to her, as though she might escape, while with his other hand and a foot he operated the spark lever and the starter.

Clearedge Street, in spite of the weeks she had lived there, became to her at moments that flat of Mrs. Russell's; to Billy it meant only that; and she felt him grasping and half releasing her arm and re-grasping her in his renewed terror, — in his insulting terror for her after she had told him her address.

"Heavens, Billy, it's a decent enough street," she said coldly. "Let go of me, and drive; you're blocking the traffic."

But, when he drove, she shared his sensation of their first departure for Clearedge Street when she had sat between Gregg and Billy and Gregg did the driving. Gregg!

How fine and understanding he had been, that night; she had not been able to realize it until long afterward; it seemed to her, indeed, that she only completely realized it now.

"What have you been doing, Marjorie? Doing?" Billy demanded and kept at her; but she now was hardly thinking of him. "I'll tell you when you get me home." She was putting off what they had to go through with until they arrived at Jen Cordeen's, when she would take it all together.

"How's Gregg, Billy?" she asked.

"I don't know."

"Why don't you know? Where is he?"

"I don't know where he is or anything about him."

"Why don't you?"

"Why should I? He's left the flat. Why should you bother about him? He knew where you were; that is, he knew you were going off with Rinderfeld!"

"Billy, let me out!"

"Oh, my God, Marjorie, you know I didn't mean that! But you made me beside myself. You did go off and gave Rinderfeld your address and you let him see you; and you told Gregg you were going — Gregg and not me! Why did you do that? You have to answer that to me! You're mine — mine!"

"No, Billy."

"Yes, you are. You promised yourself to me; you

pledged yourself; we're betrothed, you and I, Marjorie; and nothing I've done entitles you to end it. Nothing! And nothing you've done can cause me to let you go. You'd be my wife now, probably, and happy and not thinking of anything else, if your father — oh, I can't talk about him; I mean, it's been all external to you and me, the trouble between us; it's what he did that drove you away; but now I've got you back."

There in the car she did not oppose him; she dared not while they were driving; so he took her to Clearedge Street and to Jen Cordeen's, thereby keeping his promise, and there he saw for himself and learned from her how she had been living. Then he tried to take her away.

His idea was not to return her to her father or to her home; for her home, as he told her, was occupied only by the servants; her father was living, most of the time, at a club; the plan, as Billy proclaimed it to her, was to take her at once either to the Sedgwicks' in Evanston or, if she preferred not going to a friend of hers, to the home of friends of his on Bellevue Place in Chicago. He would wire immediately for his own mother, who undoubtedly would come down at once from Bay City and either take Marjorie home with her or stay with her in Chicago until Marjorie became more quiet and normal.

"Normal!" The word stuck in Marjorie's mind when at last, after creating about all the commotion possible, short of calling the police, Billy was gone. What a man like Billy meant by "normal" for a girl was being happy as his wife and not thinking of anything but compliance with his ideas and commands. Oh, high, moral ideas — ideals, indeed (that was the

trouble with them) — and only reasonable, self-respecting commands!

She thought very probably it was true that if her father had not gone to Sybil Russell — at least if, after he went, his daughter had not heard of it — Marjorie Hale would now be the wife of William Whittaker and fulfilling her destiny in accordance with his ideas, or she would be hopelessly combating them. And she wondered how much the surrender to him would actually have offended that girl she had been. "I'd have something on my hands," she reckoned grimly, when she imagined herself having married Billy and either opposing him or seeking to modify his idea of their relation.

She was in her room, undressing, and Clara was there with her; for Clara had come home in time to witness and hear much of Billy's final pleading. But Clara maintained perfect tact in such a matter; for training in tact — Marjorie previously had thought — there evidently was no such school as growing up one of a family of nine in two rooms; so Clara had no difficulty in acting as though she had observed nothing and she wholly refrained from comment until Marjorie said:

"That was the man I was engaged to."

"Hmhm," said Clara, without surprise. "It struck me over there at the table that likely he'd seen you somewhere before."

"We're not engaged now."

"Hmhm. I suspected that's what you thought."

"He's a perfectly fine man, Clara; after what you've seen, I want you to know that. You saw him at his worst to-night; sometimes — and I gave him a good

deal of cause, I know — he's like that; but then he's — just fine."

Clara was brushing her hair and she gave it several vigorous strokes. "You said he was a bad actor for him to-night, kid? That's the worst of him you ever see? Kid, then why in hell don't you marry him? Grab him off quick, I'm tellin' you; grab him off!" And Clara went to brushing more rapidly and vehemently than before.

She surprised Marjorie so that she went a few steps nearer and then, with something of Clara's tact, Marjorie withdrew to her own toilet table.

"Kid," said Clara, and her use of this address was a return to a manner which she had dropped recently, and which expressed to Marjorie that Clara felt now that her roommate had not become as sophisticated as she had thought, "I said somethin' to you once right here about there not bein' any of one sort of animal. I take it back; I was wrong; you had one up your sleeve; you've shown me."

"You mean — a — a," Marjorie hesitated, trying to recall Clara's exact words, "a pure man."

"What d' I care about purity? Gawd, Marjorie, I ain't askin' the sky to fall. If I can see a man who actually forgets himself when seein' a girl — who don't think about himself at all but just her, who don't care what show he makes of himself, who don't even know whether they're laughin' at him, and who couldn't think of carin' a damn if they was or not, so long as he could maybe, perhaps do a little thing for her, that's enough for me! Plenty, I'm tellin' you; 'bout ten thousand times more'n I ever thought to live to see! And pure! Gawd, I bet you he's just been fool enough — that man

of yours — to've kept himself straight as he'd keep you. And I sure never expected to breathe and see that."

Clara arose, her back to Marjorie and her wonderful hair fallen about her face for a screen. "Grab him off quick, I'm tellin' you," she repeated, almost like a threat. "Quick!"

When the light was out and they lay, each in her own bed, with the warm summer breeze blowing in through their three open windows, neither went easily to sleep. Clara had not mentioned Billy again but, as Marjorie lay quiet, after a lapse of time so great that Clara undoubtedly supposed her asleep, Marjorie heard a whisper: "Come, I've found you — don't you know? What have they been doing to you, Clara?" Then, savagely, "What have you done to her?"

Billy's words when he found her, except that in place of Marjorie's Clara was whispering her own name. And not all Clara had told of her own life — not all taken together — pierced Marjorie like that; and what made it more poignant was the knowledge that if Billy heard, he would not care. Clara! Why, he had come to take Marjorie away from such as her.

And Marjorie realized that he was continuing about that business now; yet her thoughts, as she lay awake, only occasionally went to him. Much of the night she considered Felix Rinderfeld and what he expected of her now — what he might have right to expect; and more she thought about Gregg, for whom Billy felt no further concern or cared to know even where he might be, because Gregg had kept faith with her against him.

On the night when she told Gregg that she was going away, she had not thought what it might entail to him; but it had lost him Billy; and Marjorie felt far more deeply than Billy himself what he was to Gregg. Per-

haps because she, like Gregg, had been a lone child; no girl had ever become sister to her as Billy had become brother to Gregg, but she could realize what it would mean if some one had. Now to-night, imagining Gregg, she saw him thinking about Billy, worrying about Billy, — not at all about himself; she could feel him wanting to return to Billy and to speak with him, wholly understanding him. And she saw Gregg thinking also of her, worrying about her, comprehending her and caring so much — so much, and yet holding himself back always, losing and giving up for her.

For, without meaning to or without being aware that he had done it, Billy to-night had told her something of how much Gregg cared; for one item, Gregg had lost his job because of her. This she learned when Billy accused her of clinging to a course of concealment which had forced — the word was Billy's — forced Gregg to take Russell away from the city to protect her and her father; that involved Gregg in absence from his office for a week and a return, battered up and without any explanation that he could offer, at a time when all an employer wanted was an excuse to let a man out. Then, through the calumny which Billy heaped on Gregg for having known her plan and having kept it secret, she had glimpses of Gregg "inanely walking the streets" — the words again were Billy's — while he looked and hoped for her instead of taking the direct, effective action which Billy had.

But Gregg, being Gregg, could not have done anything else; she had held him helpless by confiding to him, — helpless to use her confidence for himself, helpless to do more than walk the streets, searching for her and writing her through Rinderfeld, as he had. And so, after losing his job because of her, he had lost

Billy; and she — she herself directly and in person — what had she done to Gregg? Hadn't she turned her back on him and despised him and sent him away for suggesting she learn that which had to be taught her?

And there seized her a sensation of relief and let-down from strain, when now she thought of Gregg, such as — she realized — had always come to her with him; she longed, longed to talk to him and see him looking down at her and hear his voice helping her, as on that night of the day after she had fought with Billy and taken his excoriation, and her father had come home, when Gregg had come to her and taken her out of the house, where she could barely endure to stay.

For Billy again had shaken her; and she wanted to hear what Gregg, knowing all that Billy did, would say; she wanted the comfort of his, "You've been wonderful; no one like you ever in the world!" uttered gruffly, so that hardly she heard, he felt it so; she wanted to feel his fingers, not accusing and violent, but steadying, strong, and so gentle in their brief moments on her arm.

Why hadn't she told him to come when he wrote her; why had she not sent for him?

If Billy had found her before, she would have had to, she thought.

CHAPTER XXV

BILLY did not even start to bed until far into the night; for after leaving Clearedge Street he immediately sought Marjorie's father, who was neither at home nor in his club, where he had rooms. Billy waited at the club until after one o'clock and then, considering the possibility that Hale would not return at all, he went to his apartment, set his alarm clock for half-past six and got about an hour's sleep before the bell woke him. Before half-past seven, he was again at the club where Hale was now marked "in." Billy did not send up his name nor did he telephone; he went at once to Hale's door and rapped.

When Hale sleepily called, "What? Who is it?" Billy continued to knock until Hale unlocked the door, when Billy promptly pushed it open and entered. When Hale demanded, "What do you mean by ——," Billy took the knob from his hand and shut the door.

"I've found Marjorie," he said. "I came here last night and waited till half-past one this morning to tell you so."

Hale retreated slightly. "Where was she?" he asked, coldly, or deliberately making his voice dull.

"She has been living on Clearedge Street."

Hale parted his lips and shut them silently. He had got up in pyjamas and come to the door without even dressing-gown or slippers, expecting — probably — to open the door only a crack to receive a telegram or special delivery letter. His hair, being disheveled,

showed grayer than usual and his lips seemed thicker and his figure, in pyjamas, looked heavier, older. Billy, exaggerating this to himself, saw him as gross and contemptible and made Hale thoroughly aware that he was so seen.

"How is Marjorie?" Hale asked, still with an effort keeping his tone dull.

"I found her on Clearedge Street," Billy repeated.

"Well, what of that?" Hale shot sharply now. "Clearedge Street may be right enough; what do you mean? What do you mean about her, fool — fool?"

"I don't mean I found her living on Clearedge Street precisely as you were," Billy replied heavily, slowly and deliberately taunting him.

"Fool!" Hale murmured again; he half turned from Billy, staring away; then he clutched the foot of his bed. "Go on; tell me."

"You would not know her."

That was not true and Billy recognized it the moment he had it out; but, at that moment, he was not consciously describing Marjorie; he was accusing her father; and that did very well for an accusation, for Hale jerked about, his head lifting.

"Why wouldn't I?"

"Mentally, I mean, and in her character. Marjorie's physical health — if that is what you chiefly want to know ——"

"Fool," muttered Hale to himself. "Oh, fool — fool," but he could do nothing but stand and take it.

"— is fairly good, I suppose," Billy continued. "She is somewhat thinner — not than she was when she left your home but much thinner than before you ——"

Hale's eyes flashed at him and Billy omitted that.

"It is when you come to talk with her and when you observe the company she chooses now — the company she deliberately chooses and clings to — that you appreciate what you've done to your daughter."

Nothing could make matters between them worse, both knew; each wholly hated the other.

"When I found her," Billy continued, "she was with Rinderfeld — with attorney Felix Rinderfeld, whom we had to call in that night ——"

"Where was she?"

"At a restaurant; a low restaurant called, I believe ——"

"She was alone with him?"

"No; there were four at the table, her roommate ——"

"Who's her roommate?"

"Was there with another companion. I found her by following Rinderfeld, after having had him watched for a week since I discovered that, when Marjorie left you, she gave Rinderfeld her address. All the time she has been living on Clearedge Street with a girl whom she found demonstrating face creams in some place around there. Her roommate's name is Clara Seeley — anglicized from something else, I believe Marjorie said. She is Polish-Italian and comes from the slums. Marjorie seems to have been supporting herself — or trying to — by peddling a tray of trash called Bostrock's Business Boosters to druggists and cheap clothing stores and garagemen on the west side. She chose the establishment in which she has been living by taking a list of places advertising rooms to rent to a reputable real-estate office and going to the place she was warned against."

"Who told you that?"

"She admitted it."

"Well," said Hale, "well, go on. What was against the place? What——" he stopped—— "Was she——" he started again and then tried, "Has anything——?"

Whittaker half circled him deliberately, abandoning his position between Hale and the door, and deliberately he kept Hale waiting. Hale's clothes lay over the back and upon the seat of a chair as if half flung, only half placed there; his socks had been flung at the chair, probably, but had missed and lay on the floor beyond it, in relation to the bed; his collar had been flung on his dressing stand, knocking over a tin of talcum powder. In a remission of Billy's intentness upon Marjorie's situation, these details caught his mind and told a story plain enough even for Billy. When Hale had returned to his room that morning, he had been in no satisfactory mood; he had got to bed and put the light out as quickly as possible; and this fixed in Billy's mind the interpretation he previously had placed upon Hale's absence last night. Billy let his mind dwell on that; then for another series of seconds he merely stood dully, hearing the street noises which came through the open windows, feeling the slight, warm current of morning air.

"A girl took poison at that place a few days before Marjorie went there; she tried to kill herself," Billy told at last. "The man who also had passed himself as her husband, picked up somebody else and had left her. If you want the exact address where your daughter lives, ask the police for the number where they went for an ambulance call on a poison case on Clearedge Street during the second week you were at Fursten's." And Billy, without circling, started for the door; he in-

tended to pass; perhaps he would have passed without other words, but Hale stopped him.

"Has any one hurt her?" he demanded savagely. "Answer me straight, you fool! Has any one hurt her?"

But Billy was not in the least cowed by him. "Not in the sense which alone seems to disturb you in relation to a girl and then only when she is your daughter. No, not yet."

Hale let go of him and in a moment was alone, staring at the shut door; mechanically he went over and locked it. From his dressing stand he picked up a cigarette, lit it and stared in the glass; mechanically he picked up his brushes and smoothed his hair, diminishing the grayness. He felt his chin and, in the bathroom, he set to shaving.

"What did she ask about me?" he thought. "Did she ask?" He had not been able to bring himself to inquire that of Whittaker. Then he thought, "If she asked, what did he tell of me? If she asked me about myself, what could I say?" His anger at Whittaker rose hotter. "Fool; fool; the fool!" Then he thought about Marjorie on Clearedge Street. "She went there to watch me." And with a rise of defiance for her, his fears again were less and he returned to fury at Whittaker and at his own helplessness before him, at his own helplessness now to go to his daughter.

"Ask the police for the address of the poison case!" he rehearsed the contempt of Billy's reply. Hale had no idea of inquiring anything of the police; now he could trace Marjorie otherwise; but for what result to her or to him? What when he found her? For it was certain that Billy had done everything in his power to

take Marjorie away from that place and the companions to whom she clung.

Probably she would like her father to come and beg her to go, Hale thought; and he recalled, with a wince, her, "Don't touch me, father." Well, what might she have for him now?

He shaved himself unsatisfactorily, but he finished with it and came back into the bedroom and started gathering up his clothes.

"'Also.'" That had been cast in his face by Whittaker. "'The man, who also passed himself as her husband, picked up somebody else.'" That bit sharper than Whittaker guessed; or did Billy guess? Probably not; almost surely not; what Whittaker meant was that a man had passed as that girl's husband as Hale had passed as Sybil Russell's. But there was more to guess and Hale was feeling the drag of it; Sybil Russell was trying to make herself more to him than she could be.

She was not asking him to make her his wife, in a legal, recognized way; always — or at least ever since he met her — she had spoken fine scorn for the bonds by law; and she was too clever, if she was not too consistent, to ask those bonds now. But she was forever endeavoring to make herself his companion more constantly, more completely to fill the place of his wife; and there was something about it which offended Hale unreasonably; he didn't try to think it out; it was enough that sometimes a thing she said or did — an assumption of equality with his wife or with his daughter — set his teeth on edge. She never once criticized either of them; oh, she was not stupid; she simply assumed to love him too much. And though they avoided meeting on Clearedge Street, yet to be with her

anywhere became too much like being again in that flat where the man, who had been her husband, threatened him and shot him, and where his daughter, with her friends, had come and found him.

So, sometimes, he did not want to seek Sybil Russell or even think about her at all; and when his thoughts, thus driven from her, found lodging, they rested — he became increasingly aware — with a woman whom only recently he had met, a woman who set his pulses throbbing fuller, alluring him, daring him; she had not a previous husband to make trouble and she was no one whom his daughter ever had seen.

Yet when Charles Hale found his thoughts dwelling with her, he caught himself up sharply, for he realized this meant he was desiring not love of a mate, but woman; and he swore to himself he would not let himself go on that road. No; to turn from his wife to the truer love — or what he could at least call the truer love of Sybil Russell — that was one thing; but to become a common follower of women was another. Yet, as matters lay, it was this or Sybil Russell for him now; and in either case, no home; no honor for him where he rested, no clasp and kiss of his child and her voice full of love for him, and admiration, "Father, you're so fine! I love you so!"

That which echoed in his ear was what Marjorie had cried to him as he left his home that night, — the last night it was anything like a home for him. And for it all, he had exchanged — he would not let himself reckon. The scar on his body, bare for an instant as he dressed, showed where Russell's bullet had gone through and Grantham's knife had entered afterwards; he covered it as quickly as possible.

CHAPTER XXVI

MARJORIE that morning telephoned to Billy's apartment at an hour when Billy would probably be gone and Dora would have come in to clean.

"I'm Miss Hale," Marjorie explained to Dora. "Mr. Whittaker tells me Mr. Mowbry left with you an address for forwarding his mail."

"Oh, Miss Hale!" exclaimed Dora. "He's gone to Ontario Street," and she gave a house number. "No; no telephone there; or at least he didn't tell me."

It was plain that Dora was troubled by recent happenings; she evidently would like to talk to Miss Hale about them and there was in Dora's tone, though respectful, a shade of accusation of Miss Hale.

This was the first time Marjorie had been Miss Hale since the servants in Evanston so addressed her; and she wondered if Dora, hearing her voice, noticed any change in it. Herself, she did not know quite who she was this morning; not Marjorie Conway, or she must have gathered up the little case containing what Billy called her "tray of trash" and traveled, in business-like way, to her exclusive territory. Instead she went, empty-handed, to Ontario Street, finding the number which Dora had given her in a block of old, dingy mansions which had been comfortable city homes in the decade following the great fire but now were run-down remainders between stores and warehouses.

Gregg could have chosen the place for its cheapness

only, Marjorie thought, as she gazed up at the grimy, gray glass door, the dirty transom, the paint-peeled, rusty iron rail at the side of the blackened, stone steps. The high, narrow, old-fashioned windows were open, and gray, streaked lace curtains wafted in and out.

When Marjorie rang, a sallow, black-haired, lethargic undefinable — perhaps a half-blood Chinese, perhaps a Filipino — opened the door and in carefully articulated syllables said, "Mis-ter Mow-bry may-be is in; may-be out. I will as-cer-tain." And he did so by retreating to the bottom of the narrow well made by the winding of the stairs and calling, in a volume of voice evidently calculated to reach the top floor, "Mister Mow-bry! For Mis-ter Mow-bry, a young lad-y at the door."

No one replied; at least Gregg did not reply, though several doors opened and Marjorie, watching the undefinable gaze upward, received the distinct impression that persons above were gazing downward. She persuaded the undefinable to climb to Mr. Mowbry's room and when he returned with a negative report, she tempered her disappointment with a certain sense of relief at not having to imagine Gregg at this moment a tenant of a room here; she was glad it was summer when the windows could stand open.

"Here at 9.30. Dear Gregg: Billy found me last night. I think I'm glad," she pencilled on a sheet of paper she had brought. "How soon can I see you? I want to, terribly."

And she wrote her Clearedge Street address, signed "Marjorie," put it in an envelope which she sealed and thrust in a conspicuous place in a wire rack on the wall beside the stairs.

It was not in the position in which she left it when Gregg returned about half-past five, nevertheless it was the first thing he saw on the rack, — Marjorie's writing!

He seized the envelope and swung about, making sure he was alone, then tore it open.

"She's back," he had thought, in his first startle at seeing his name in her writing. Back from — from what, he did not know; but she was back! Now, holding her words before him, he realized she wasn't back; it was only that Bill had found her last night; and so she was "here" this morning at nine-thirty because, having been found by Bill, she now wanted him.

"She's not back," he said to himself, almost aloud; yet "Here at 9.30." Something about that — about her starting with that and putting it in that way, "here" — was good. She'd come here herself; and he thought where he had been at nine-thirty and how uselessly; he stepped into the old, faded front parlor to look at the ticking, marble clock, for Gregg did not have a watch these days. Now it was twenty-five minutes to six; and it must be almost another hour, at best, before he could reach her; for Gregg, who had no watch, neither had his partly-paid-for car; nor even taxi fare. "Street cars have got to do," he calculated with himself, and their slowness seemed already to seize and cramp him.

The minute before, when he first saw her writing, he could have run up the flights of stairs two steps at a time with her note in his hand; but instead, he immediately had opened it, and now he climbed slowly, thinking, feeling — feeling too much, too much, he accused himself; and too much afraid.

In his room, he was slow with his clumsy appur-

tenances of toilet; his heavy bowl and crock of cool water and his single, stringy towel; he took time to descend to the kitchen for hot water; and though he had shaved that morning, he shaved carefully again, polished his shoes and brushed his clothes. Also he took time, when he obtained from a locked drawer the note she had written him asking him to come to dinner that night of the Lovells' dance, to compare her writing then with her writing now, and he wondered about the difference. But at last he set off to her.

Marjorie then and during the succeeding hour before he reached her was not at Jen Cordeen's but on the beach of the lake; for of course she had no idea when Gregg might get her note or when he might come; and she needed the lake this evening.

It is in reality a sea, that body of water upon which lies Chicago; and the city is situated, not up an estuary or behind a harbor or on a bay; no, the city faces right out to sea. You gaze from the streets over water limitless to the east, limitless around the circle till, north, your eye catches the shore; limitless, likewise, stretches the sea to the south; great ships steam upon it; lighthouses point to the sky; storms blow and waves wash and break and boom oceanlike on the shore, and the wind comes down from over water — vast, elemental water — water, nothing else. Or the wind is gone; not even a breeze; calm; but a hundred miles away over the water may be wind, and so the surface before you moves of itself, it seems, in rounded, silent swells, slipping toward the shore till they whiten in tiny, rustling breakers on the edge of the sand, and run up to your feet and flow back and run at you again.

So it was this evening, while Marjorie sat on the sand, the tiny waves rustling below her feet, the silent

limitlessness of the horizon leading her away and away; behind her the city; and, in the moments of her self-consciousness while waiting, sometimes she thought trite things, such as that her back was to the man-made, the artificial, the passing, and her face was to the natural and the enduring. Then she became amused at herself and quoted the slogan of Goldberg's series of cartoons: "Sounds all right, but it doesn't mean anything." Yet, it did mean something and she was there because it did; for it was different to think about affairs in your room and here alone on the edge of the lake; you simply had to hold matters in different proportion.

The daylight was going when, at last, Gregg appeared; the minute before, when she glanced down the beach, no one in particular was about; and now there he was!

She had not admitted to herself, until she caught sight of him, how much she had feared that his move to the boarding-house on Ontario Street must make deteriorating changes in him; but here he was, in bearing, in dress, in manner just as he used to be! She was on her feet and he saw her.

"Hello, Marjorie!" And he took off his straw hat as he came to her just as if he had seen her yesterday and every day before; just as if they were used to meeting here. No; not just like that; she knew it and he knew she did; it was just his way of admitting, by denying, how much he felt.

"Gregg, hello!" she said and stepped to him quickly. Her hand went into his with an impatient impulse which she did not try to check; and she got the satisfaction it sought — his holding hers, not too tight; nothing more meaningless than those crushing clasps and they

always hurt, too. He found some satisfaction also, she thought.

"Have trouble getting here, Gregg?"

"No," he replied slowly. "Not after I got your note. I found your place easily enough and succeeded in convincing your hard-boiled friend I was the party of first address, though I wouldn't exactly classify her as cursed with a foolishly trustful disposition."

Marjorie laughed and explained proudly, "That was Clara Seeley, my roommate. You see, after last night, Billy came again this morning and was waiting when I got home; I didn't go to work to-day. When Clara was back from work, I thought I'd come down here for some quiet and I told her, if you came, to send you."

They had dropped hands and they stood frankly looking each other over.

"When did you happen on your natural protector?"

"Oh, I've had her from the first; we've been together all the time."

"Both of you've been in luck," Gregg said and tossed his hat a little way from them on the sand. "What was that work you didn't go to to-day? What — d'you want to tell me, Marjorie, about you — what you've been at and what ——"

"I want to tell you everything." That was it, she realized with herself at this moment; and she sat down on the sand, clasping his hand again and drawing him down beside her. "But first I want to know what's been happening with you, Gregg?"

"All right," agreed Gregg; and he drew a penny from his pocket. "We'll pitch for it; heads, you tell me first; tails, I tell you." And he spun it upwards and let it fall before them on the sand; and they both bent forward to see it.

"Tails," admitted Gregg. "Well, I'm soon through; probably Bill's told you most about me, anyway. I got fired because I wasn't producing; consequently, I had to cut expenses and moved to the quarters you've seen."

"You've not got another position yet, Gregg?"

"No; nor a job yet, either."

Not a word of his quarrel with Billy; and of course not a word of the start of his difficulty at his office when he was absent without leave for almost a week, because of her, and returned without offering explanation. Not an accent of regret for himself at having to inhabit the quarters she had seen; and, upon him, not a sign of any difference to him. His light-weight blue suit, which must have been new that spring, was spotless and perfectly pressed; his hair had probably been trimmed that day; she liked always the clean, well-kept look of him and, in spite of that house servanted only by the undefinable, Gregg was Gregg; and he was very good to have beside you.

"Now," he said, picking up his penny. "Your turn."

She wanted to know more of him; oh, she needed to know so much more! But she did not want him to tell her those things; and she realized he never would; and so, more simply than she could have imagined, she started to tell him about herself; about going first to see Mrs. Russell, on the morning after she had refused to speak with him for having lunched with Mrs. Russell; about Mr. Dantwill and Jen Cordeen and Clara and Jake Saltro and Sam Troufrie and Mr. Bostrock and some of her customers; of Sennen's and the strange, new but now familiar other places; and, of course, about Felix Rinderfeld and Wells' "Outline" and finally of Billy's coming. She did not recount events in order;

she skipped forward, backward, forgetting some one or something she ought to tell before he could understand some one or something else; and of course she told the same happening over twice, frequently, repeating something Clara or Jake or Mr. Rinderfeld had said or she had thought. And it was a wonderful satisfaction — a wonderful relief — to go over it all with Gregg just as it came to her, to be able to say anything just as it struck her, without having to think how he would take it differently and without fear — absolutely without fear of him.

"I think," she said impulsively to him once, when she was feeling this, "you're the best sort of friend in the world, Gregg."

"Pretty dark, now," he replied; for it was in some sense a reply, at least a commentary on her praise of him.

"What do you mean?" she asked, obviously not questioning the fact that night had come.

"Oh, you're not getting a view of me."

What had she been saying just before, she wondered. She remembered that she had been speaking about Mr. Rinderfeld.

"Had supper, Marjorie?" Gregg inquired.

"No."

"Let's have some." He pushed himself up and recovered his hat.

"Where shall we? Can't we have it here? You and I go up to a delicatessen and get something and bring it back here. Or ——" Marjorie seized her plan as she spoke — "I've the key of a boathouse just up here where Sam Troufrie has a canoe. Clara keeps it — the key, I mean. She gave it to me to-night."

"Fine! Then you stay here and I'll go up and get some things."

"Why shouldn't we go together?"

Gregg hesitated, half hidden in the dark. "Bill," he said unconvincingly. "He's probably about looking for you now. I don't want to give you back yet."

She laughed. "But even Billy couldn't watch every delicatessen." Then she remembered the rooming house to which Gregg had moved and she caught his forearm.

"Gregg, I'm going fifty-fifty with you on our supper."

"Oh, no, you're not!"

"You told me yourself that's what a girl ought to do."

"Not you with me!"

"Why not?" Then she demanded of him frankly, "Gregg, how much money have you with you?"

He moved slightly, withdrawing his arm from her clasp. "Three ones," he replied to her, first defensively, and then he gave in, honestly. "One dollar; one dime; and one cent."

"I've three dollars with me, Gregg. Not all earned!" she put in quickly, to avoid a seeming of boasting. "It's mostly or perhaps this is all from some money I'd had of my own before I left Evanston. Let's pool, Gregg; please! And let's go together! If you don't let me, I can't stay; I'll go right back now before I let you ——"

He grasped her arm and held her quietly but with an intentness which weakened and overcame her as never had all the violence of Billy. "You'll not go back now, Marjorie," he said.

"No; but — we'll do this together, Gregg, or I'll not eat a bite. Not one; I'll not have you — living where

you are, Gregg, and going without, yourself, and all because of me, anyway. Oh, Gregg, you'll not spoil this; we'll go up together and buy things together — let's buy the bread and the butter and the filling separately and make our own sandwiches out in the canoe and — you'll not spoil it, will you? "

"No," said Gregg, and let her go. "I'll not spoil it."

So they went up from the beach together to the brightness of Clarendon Avenue, which edges the sand there, and on the other side they found a shop and together, each playing fair with the other, they made their purchases. With them they returned to the shore, where they found, in the darkness, Sam Troufrie's boathouse, and Gregg carried out the canoe. "Imagine Billy using anything of Sam's," Marjorie thought, as she picked up cushions and paddle and followed to the water.

She took her place in the bow, facing him as he sent the canoe swiftly from shore with steady, almost splashless strokes of the paddle. When they were perhaps a hundred yards out, she said, "Shall we drift now?"

He gave a last vigorous stroke and put the paddle athwart and after the impetus was gone, they floated, hardly drifting, barely turning, there was so little breeze; and the stars twinkled in the dark water beside them. There was no moon that night, just a clear, starry sky as there had been on the night that they had walked along the water's edge north, up there where was Evanston and Northwestern University. Marjorie thought of that night and she was sure that Gregg must; but neither of them mentioned it yet. Neither spoke at all; they rested, listening to the land sounds coming over the water, — motor horns now and then,

the rush of cars on Clarendon Avenue; with surprising distinctness, occasionally, the cries of bathers under the lights to the south and the splash of diving. Some one else on the water was playing.

"Violin," guessed Gregg.

"No," Marjorie whispered, so as to miss none of a marvelously sweet, stirring, plaintive strain. "It's a flute! And I know that and love it!" And both listened till the music ceased.

"That was made for now," Gregg said.

"Yes; it's the Meditation from 'Thaïs'!"

People nearer shore clapped; and the musician played his pipe again.

It took her back, that Meditation, to her Evanston days when, with her father and mother, she went each Tuesday night in winter to hear opera.

The people near shore tried to win another encore but the flute stayed silent and only the dance jazz came; so Marjorie cut the loaf with the knife from the lunch box Sam kept in the canoe; Gregg opened their can of potted ham and she spread the sandwiches. She had stuffed eggs and strawberries, which they ate from the stems, and he had iced ginger ale, which they drank from the bottles through straws. "A regular, old-fashioned picnic," Marjorie called it; and they handed things to each other, cleared up and put away scraps together and then, sometimes paddling, sometimes drifting, they talked or were silent just as they liked; and when either spoke it was with no feeling of necessity to connect what was in one's head now with the last subject.

"What do you know about father now?" she asked at one of these times. It was her first direct question about him.

"He's certainly keeping Tri-Lake humming."

"But he?"

Gregg took refuge in his privilege of silence.

"He's seeing Mrs. Russell, Billy is sure," Marjorie went on quietly. "Do you think Billy's right?"

"Yes, Marjorie."

It caused her no start or any agitation at all, Gregg noticed.

"When I went to see Mrs. Russell," Marjorie mentioned the incident again, "and she wasn't in, I never tried to find her again. My first idea — it's not easy for me to remember exactly what my ideas were in those days, but I think it must have been to tell her, no matter how hard it would be for me to speak to her, exactly what she was. But I guess it struck me, when I got back in that apartment where my father had been, that I didn't know; anyway, I couldn't even talk to the woman who was there. She was some one Mr. Rinderfeld had on duty, he's told me; she was there looking for Russell, in case he came back. Mr. Rinderfeld didn't know you'd found Russell then — and taken him away. You should never have done so much for me, Gregg."

After a while she said, "I told Billy this morning that I will never marry him; it's true, I never will."

Gregg drew up his paddle at that; they had been moving slowly. Drip, drip it went, over the side.

"He'll never marry any one else, Marjorie," he said, his voice as dead level as he could manage.

"I got afraid to-day about Billy."

"He'll never hurt you."

"But he might do anything to himself or to any one he imagined might hurt me; and Billy's not a slow one to imagine." Suddenly she shivered so violently that

Gregg felt it. "I'm his, you see; he's absolutely sure that, if I want to do anything else than marry him, because I promised to when I knew nothing — not a thing in the world — he's sure it's the result of the damage done me by father and what I did, with Mr. Rinderfeld and with you, to conceal the truth. He's determined to bring me back to what I was."

"What do you want to do, Marjorie?"

"What can I? I can't marry Billy; I can't go back to father; I can't go to mother — not without telling her everything. I couldn't stand it; I couldn't. And I won't tell her — yet. To tell her, that would make everything that's been done — your risking your life with Russell, my lie to Mr. Stanway and father's putting him out of Tri-Lake and starting the big, wonderful things he's doing — it would make everything we've done useless, mad, crazy. And it would make Billy right. I shouldn't care about that; but I do. All along he's said we have to have our frightful, terribly personal and private disgrace out for every one to see; and I've said we haven't. Yet he may be right, when father goes on with Mrs. Russell; it may be that scandal after all is the only thing which can touch him. But there must be some other way out besides scandal or coming not to care."

"You don't feel that, Marjorie?"

"That I'm coming not to care? No, Gregg; people seem to be coming that way; but they only seem, Gregg. That's all. Take Clara."

"Your hard-boiled friend?"

"Hmhm. To hear Clara talk, you'd think she was absolutely cynical; that she expected nothing and hoped for nothing of any man and mighty little of any girl. But care for honor and decency! Why, I couldn't be-

gin to care like that girl!" And she told Gregg how Clara had witnessed Billy's coming and how Clara had been unable to understand her not "grabbing" Billy.

"That's part of what you meant, I see," she continued, "when you told me that night at home that people down here were most of them all right and also working out relations between men and women on a sounder basis than in lots of other places. Clara certainly is; I know Billy and mother and most of our friends at home would think me absolutely crazy if I said so, but I've never met a girl as fundamentally right as Clara; for she's honest and clean, absolutely. And when she marries any man — for though she said she never will, for she could never trust any one, she will — it won't be on any kept wife basis."

"What?" said Gregg quietly.

"That's what she calls it. That's what the other girls about here, whom I know and who are married, call the wives who live with their husbands without any intention of having children and without doing any real work; for you can't call taking care of a kitchenette apartment real work for a woman. Clara's friends have children or they work. They think that when a girl marries a man without intention of having children — children, plural, children, not just one child to display as your duty done to your husband and society — she's no better than the women we call a mighty ugly name. When Clara marries a man, she's going to bear children; and if she doesn't, or when she no longer does, she's not going to lie about and gad about and take her husband's money for what — for what, if she wasn't wearing a wedding ring, she couldn't do and stay in any decent society. But that's what lots and lots of us women — us respectable girls — do on the Drive and

up the north shore and in Evanston and so on and call it marriage, and call themselves respectable and useful, when they don't *do* a thing but live by — well, I'm still a prude, so let's call it marriage. What do you think?"

Gregg remained silent; and when she directly challenged him again, he said: "My father is a doctor, you know! up in Muskegon. A doctor sees a lot of life and sees it pretty straight but he seldom talked to me about what people call life. He did tell me, long ago, that he wanted me to know that after I was born, it became impossible for mother to have more children. Then when I was leaving home to live in Chicago, he thought maybe I might marry, I suppose, so he said to me that he wanted me to bear one thing in mind about marriage — that it wasn't made by a minister but by the man and the girl. He said for me never to think that, by taking a girl with me to a minister, I could make moral a relation which in its essence was immoral." Gregg hesitated. Then he said: "I didn't think much about that at the time or since; not until recently. I don't suppose I was able to understand it till now.. It's what you've just been speaking of, Marjorie; but it's from the man's side."

And he lifted the paddle and moved the canoe. "No," said Marjorie, stopping him. "Let's go this through. I'm an only child; and I don't believe that, after I was born, anything happened to my mother but social ambition. Father, I believe — I'm going to be fair to him — at one time certainly must have wanted more children; but mother wanted to move us from Irving Park to Evanston; then she wanted to go to Europe. Well, she moved us and she went — on father's money; and once, when she came back, he'd

found Mrs. Russell. It's not so strange to me now as it was. Mother was living by having been married to him and taking money from him but really doing nothing abroad or at home but spending his money; not a committee, not a directorate she would have been on, except for father's money; Mrs. Russell at least did not want him for money. Let us go in now, Gregg."

He pointed the canoe shoreward. "You're staying on at Clearedge Street?"

"I don't know. I've gathered all sorts of understandings, you see, Gregg; but I don't seem to know any better what to do. Father's life's not mine; nor mother's; nor Billy's; nor Clara's, much as I like her — love her, Gregg. She'll always be a friend of mine; but I don't honestly like to make a living selling Bostrock's Business Boosters and calling Jen Cordeen's a home. I'm sick — homesick, Gregg, often; I admit it. I want — I want so what I had or thought I had. I want to go back now and get it all back. Oh, that's silly, silly; of course I can't."

"It's not silly," Gregg denied gruffly; but that was all he could say. Here he was, without a job, in debt, with cash in his pocket fifty-eight cents now and cash in prospect absolutely nothing. So he clung tight to his paddle, as on that night when he drove with her beside him to Clearedge Street he had clung tight to his steering-wheel, to keep himself from touching her; and he held tight shut his lips.

"I'm going to have a talk with Mr. Rinderfeld tomorrow evening," she told him after a minute. "He's been a wise, true friend to me from the very first, Gregg; sometimes he's said, because he's had to say, hard things, but he's always said them as considerately as he could; and always they seem to prove true. I said

some of that before him last night when Billy was abusing him; and he flushed like a boy. He's feelings; of course, he has fine feelings which no one credits him with because of his business; that's not fair to him when his business is necessary; at least, it's been necessary to us."

Gregg thrust his paddle in deep, drew it powerfully backward and lifted it out. "You're going to talk over with Rinderfeld what you ought to do now?"

"Yes," said Marjorie. "Wouldn't you?"

He held the paddle athwart again and listened to it drip, drip beside him; he listened, also, to the thump, thump of his pounding heart. Almost, as on the last night when he had been with her and she had told him of Rinderfeld, almost he spoke against the man who, without her knowing it, had caught such hold of her. But, then and throughout that week before she went away and he knew she was going, Gregg had played the side of trusting her to herself; and now he decided to play it out and so, putting his paddle into the water again, he replied:

"Yes, I'd hear what Rinderfeld has to say."

Billy, of course, had never played that side; and he was never further from any impulse to chance it than he was on the next evening when he learned the reason Marjorie was not at home to see him was that she had gone out alone with Felix Rinderfeld.

There was no doubt whatever that she had dined with him at a certain "garden" which Billy reached not ten minutes after they had left it; for a man who knew both of them had seen them together. For some reason they had risen rather abruptly, leaving on their table an order which had just been served. During the forty minutes following, Billy had no track of them

and then, as he drove from one suspected place to another, he picked up Rinderfeld's trail again.

With a girl — a rather small, dark-haired, nice-looking girl — he had occupied a booth and, after some drinks had been served, they had gone out to Rinderfeld's roadster.

Drinking! For the girl had been drinking; Marjorie drinking. She had told Billy how she had drunk with Jake Saltro. Now she was drinking with Rinderfeld.

When Billy got word of them again, Rinderfeld had her under the influence of liquor; drunk or drugged, Billy thought; and again they were ahead of Billy, but now they were easier to trace. For they had halted this time at a wet resort near the edge of the city and had left it headed out from town on a concrete road running into the country. "For Cragero's, probably," some one said.

Cragero's was likely enough, a road house with a reputation, many miles away out in that dark, lonely country.

Billy drove out on that road to Cragero's as few ever had before and as William Whittaker never in his life previously had driven; he came with cut-out open and with electric horn sounding constantly, so that other motorists on the road that summer night supposed him an officer of some sort responding to an emergency call; they drew aside and let him by and watched his lights disappear, his motor roaring and horn screaming for way — way ahead.

At a turn, he left the road, skidded across soft ground to a fence and smashed a wheel; but he was unhurt, or very little injured, for he got back to the road as the nearest car was halting. This happened to be a cheaper car than Billy's and was driven

by a man willing to bargain who, partly influenced by Whittaker's frantic appeals, partly induced by Billy's business card and two hundred dollars cash bonus then and there paid, exchanged cars with Whittaker. And so Billy went on.

He arrived at Cragero's a few minutes after eleven o'clock and found Rinderfeld's roadster parked. The testimony of all present in the public rooms agreed that the large, light-haired, hatless man who entered was in a state of extreme excitement, — so extreme, indeed, that several were badly frightened, thinking him actually crazy.

He did not find, in the public rooms, the persons he sought and after an abusive argument with the proprietor, he rushed upstairs and began beating on doors and shouting. Then he attacked the house "bouncer." The testimony agreed that the bouncer, although provoked, made no attack but merely tried to stop the disturbances; when grappled, he tried to free himself and while they were struggling, they fell or tripped and threw themselves violently downstairs. The big, light-haired man happened to fall under and he struck very violently.

At the bottom, the bouncer got up; but the big, light-haired man made no move and his head turned back in a strange position.

"He's taken his, Cragero!" the bouncer realized and whispered the alarm to the circle closing about. "This guy's got his."

And then a door above, upon which Billy had been pounding thirty seconds before, opened and a cool, dark-haired man gazed down.

CHAPTER XXVII

HALE intended to sleep late into the next morning, which was Sunday, but he roused shortly after seven o'clock and remained unsatisfactorily awake, gazing at the ceiling and the walls and out the windows of his room at his club. In part, the heat and the breathlessness of the day were to blame, for little or no air was stirring above Michigan Boulevard; the emptiness of Grant Park, across the avenue, was hazy under the slanting, orange sunlight, and beyond, the deserted lake lay mirrorlike, gleaming with a long, dazzling distortion of the sun; the city seemed unnaturally hushed. The air smelled of streets; you felt about you the oppression of enormous, crowding buildings, but the streets were almost silent.

"Sunday," Hale reminded himself aloud, when he felt this; and he turned over, shut his eyes and tried to sleep again but did not; instead he only denied conscious reflection with a result that he subjected himself to a series of unsummoned memories and impressions: of Sunday morning when he had been a little boy at home; Sunday in those days meant duties and depression and fear. God knew about you, whatever you did and wherever you were and no matter whether anybody else discovered you or not, God saw and put down and punished you, exactly, justly, without a chance of your escaping him; God! Charles Hale, president of Tri-Lake Products and Materials, did not believe much in God; but Charlie Hale, who had been a little boy, had

a way of coming within him; and this projected before Charles Hale an image of his mother knowing what he recently had been doing. How she would pray and pray for him.

He sat up in bed and stared out his window. Sunday, and Sybil wanted him to spend such days as Sunday with her; she wanted themselves alone, far away out in the country, a long, peaceful, happy day. He swore at the thought of it. Sunday; he dropped back on his pillow and again closed his eyes. Sunday now in that little flat where Marjorie was born; he could not afford a servant, so Sunday was a day he helped about the apartment and played with the baby; hmm, how he could hear her, almost feel her, warm and quick — he always was proud of the quickness of her and her laugh and her straight look into his eyes. Hmm; he opened his eyes to stop seeing that. Sunday; now he was in a little clapboard house in Irving Park where he used to cut the lawn and do odd jobs about the place; now in Evanston on Sunday, where he began lying in bed longer and there came Marjorie's little, quick rap at his door. "Hello, Margy; come in!" Her little cry in response and her rush to have her arms about him and her kiss, "Oh, father, you're so fine!" And she thought that about him, felt that down to the night he went away and she came and found him at that flat.

Well, this Sunday here he was in his club and Marjorie was up there on Clearedge Street — a right enough street, as he had said to Billy. Because it was generally decent, Sybil and he had chosen it for their flat and somebody else, who also passed as a husband, had chosen it for his home with that girl who had taken poison. Hale had her street number, having traced it through the newspaper mention of the poison case; con-

sequently he possessed the street number of his daughter's present residence, but he had not visited the place. If he did, and she was home, how could he answer what she was sure to ask?

Whittaker, of course, was looking out for her; Whittaker, indeed, appeared to be occupied with nothing else; and knowledge of that was reassuring and comforting to Charles Hale. It gave him time he needed to consider his course in respect to his daughter and that girl, not married to him nor wanting to be married, but who had no idea of giving him up; obviously, Marjorie could not be in real danger with Billy about.

It was perhaps twenty minutes later that he opened his door to see if the hallboy had brought his paper and in the dim light he read the headline spread across the front page: LAWYER SLAIN AT ROAD HOUSE.

Hale picked up the paper and carried it into his room without special thought of this sensation; indeed, he was attracted to glance at a column which had no connection with it, when his eye caught, "William Whittaker."

That brought him up; could that be Billy? There it was; no doubt about it. "With the well-known law firm of Kemphill, James, Jones and Stern."

Billy Whittaker at Cragero's road house and killed in a brawl, — Billy! What was Billy doing there? And with this, fright shot a film before Hale's sight; Billy was Marjorie's protector; he had just been thinking of him as Marjorie's protector and as making Marjorie safe.

Now he could read again. "Whittaker seems to have rushed into the roadhouse convinced that a friend of his was held there. He ——"

Sight, or at least ability to focus on type, went from Hale and returned to him only intermittently; and so, now a few lines and now a few lines more he read the account — the careful, guarded half-account, or less than half-account, of what had occurred at Cragero's. All confused with "allegeds" and "it was said" and the concealment of names which a newspaper employs in its first record of a sudden event likely to involve important people and not clearly understood. But the main fact was perfectly clear; William Whittaker had gone there because he had followed some one else and he had got into trouble there because he had tried to "save" her; and, if he were not too late, anyway, he had failed. That was obvious and undeniable, because he had been killed.

And Hale, having read all that the newspaper told, dropped it and his hands went limp; his whole body went limp, even his lips as he tried to cry to himself his daughter's name, "Marjorie."

Where she was now, what had happened to her, the paper did not say; it did not actually print her name at all. It just told of a girl who was there and of a man who was with her.

"Rinderfeld!" Hale cried, his lips strong now. "Rinderfeld, the cover-up!" Of course; and how Rinderfeld had covered up for himself; he was on the ground, right there, before any one from the police or papers arrived. Rinderfeld with Marjorie!

Hale was at the 'phone on his wall. "Have a cab at the door for me at once!"

As he got into clothes, he thought, "I could telephone that place where she is. I could get the number;

I could find out whether she's there; but if she is — what of it? I don't think she's dead; or gone away."

His telephone rang and he jumped; but it was only the doorman to say, "Cab is waiting, Mr. Hale."

He went down and gave the cabman the number on Clearedge Street from which the police had taken the poison case; then he sat back and told himself not to think; not to try to think. Billy dead; and Marjorie — Marjorie?

Clearedge; nearer and nearer he was drawing to Clearedge. How well he knew the turns, the names of the near-by places and streets. Ah, now he was near the number. Quiet about there; most curtains down; nobody up. A few girls and boys on the street going toward the lake for early morning bathing.

"Wait!" he cried to the driver when the taxi was before the number of that poison case. He was in the vestibule, ringing and knocking at the entrance door. A drowsy man opened, who knew no Miss Hale; so Hale shook him and described. The man recognized. "Oh, Miss Conway — in number twelve!"

Hale reached the door and knocked; knocked.

A voice answered; Marjorie's. "Who is it?"

"Marjorie, your father!"

"What?"

"Open that door!"

She opened a few inches; and there she stood, rousing from sleep. Rousing; that meant, until he knocked, she had slept!

"Why, father; what's the matter? Something's happened to mother? You had a cable? You ——"

But her father stared and clung to the door casing. "She doesn't even know," he realized with himself.

"She doesn't even know." And then, because he must tell her something, he said:

"No; not your mother, Marjorie. Billy!"

She jerked and drew the door farther open. "What's happened to him?"

"He's been hurt, Margy."

"Hurt? You mean, father, he's been — badly hurt!"

"Margy, he's dead."

"Dead," she repeated. "Billy dead." Of course it could not come to her; and what held it from reaching her as nearly as it otherwise might was that her father, upon seeing her, had become so queerly let down. "He's dead," he had said in strange, dull words, almost as if just remembering his news.

"Margy," he said her name again; and she stepped back into the room. "Come in here, father," she said, forgetting Clara in bed beside her.

He entered, ignoring that strange, dark-haired girl sitting up in the farther of the two beds; or rather, he saw her and accepted her as his daughter's companion. "Here is where Marjorie has been living," he thought, as he glanced about the room. "There is that girl from the slums — who Billy told me was from the slums — with whom Marjorie's been rooming." And his mind went blank about that girl; went blank now even about Marjorie, for about her he had made a mistake; and he jumped in his thought to his room at the club two mornings ago when Billy — big and red and violent in his strength — had told him of his daughter living here with this girl; and for the first time, Hale himself realized that Billy was dead.

"How is Billy dead?" Marjorie was saying to him; she had shut the door. "Father, what is it?"

He stared at her, for the instant unable to speak. His mind — no, not his mind but something driving his mind was accusing him, and he had first to reply to it. A moment ago, it had let up on him after seizing him there in his room where he had had the newspaper in his hand; there it had cried to him that he had done to his daughter what he had feared and then denied, he had done to her the frightful and irremediable; but here she was in her nightdress before him and it was — almost — as though she were at home in her own room, only alarmed. She was thinner; Billy had told him that; but, expecting that she would be yet thinner, her father found her well and sound; yes, sound! Her eyes? Just the alarm in them; her hair and her clear, soft skin seemed as they always were. So he had not hurt her so much; but Billy — Billy was dead.

"He was killed," Hale said.

"Killed. How?"

"At a road house; at Cragero's."

"Billy at Cragero's?"

"Yes; he — went there."

What had he told her in that tone he could not control? You must have been to blame for his going there; I was to blame back of you; this was in that driver of his tongue.

"When did he go there? When was it, father?"

"Last night."

"What time?"

"Before midnight. It's in the paper this morning, Marjorie."

"Let me see. Let me see!"

"I didn't bring the paper."

The door opened; the girl who had been in the farther bed was at it; how she got there, kimono on over night-

dress and with her feet in slippers, Hale did not know. She had the door open and she went out; she was back in a moment with a newspaper in her hand. That newspaper! He could not see the headlines, for she held them before her. She shut the door and looked, not at him, but at Marjorie. "Here it is, kid," she said; but she did not let go of the paper when Marjorie seized it but held it between them, that front page, while the rest of the sheets — the colored comic section, the thick, black-printed folds of advertisements, slid down to the floor about their feet.

"Kid," said that black-haired girl again, that girl from the slums. "He made a pick-up last night after you left him; that's what happened, kid; and he — he" this was another he now — "he thought it was you, and he didn't care what happened to himself; what happened to himself, why, he didn't care a damn."

Then Hale, standing there, learned how it had occurred; his daughter had been with Rinderfeld at a restaurant early in the evening; Billy must have heard of that. But she had gone home and Rinderfeld almost immediately had taken another companion; Billy had missed that; he must have supposed, as this black-haired girl said, that Rinderfeld had Marjorie at Cragero's and, so supposing, Billy had not cared what happened to himself.

Hale went from the room. Marjorie, his daughter, was safe; that was, at least Rinderfeld had not harmed her; she had never been at Cragero's at all. That was what he had come to know; and, having ascertained it, there was nothing for him to wait for. Billy was dead; he had brought the news, and he had nothing useful to say to his daughter about it. Billy was dead.

Leaving the building, Hale walked down Clearedge

Street without conscious choice of destination, except that he was avoiding the direction of Number 4689 and he forgot the taxi he had left waiting until the man drove after him and called.

"Oh, yes," Hale recollected. "Thanks." And he got in.

"Where to, sir?"

Where to? That was it; where to, this Sunday morning? Not to Sybil Russell; the plan of spending this day with her had set him swearing hardly an hour ago and that was before the newspaper had come. Now the idea made him sick as if with hollowness and heaviness — contradictory, how could that be, hollow heaviness — but here he had it within him. He had other contradictions, too; he was hungry; at least, the habit of eating, before he went about in the morning, was on him; but he could not feel himself stomaching food. Where to? He had to answer that or pay off the man and walk; and then, where to? That was only putting the question back to himself.

"Just drive me about a while," Hale said.

"North?" suggested the man; he meant nothing by it, nothing more than that north along the lake lie the most attractive roads on a summer Sunday morning. But north lay Evanston.

"No," said Hale. "The west side parks; just drive me through those."

He lit a cigarette as the cab turned from Clearedge; Sunday, quiet and calm; a few more bathers, in bathrobes, coats or mackintoshes over bathing suits and barefooted or in slippers, bound for the beaches; except for the cabs and street cars and here and there an opening refreshment place, no business activity. But the newspapers to-day would be busy; what had happened

at Cragero's had occurred so late at night that they had been obliged to publish the few, evident facts without investigating what lay behind them; but to-day gave time for that. Kemphill, James, Jones and Stern; from the cards in Billy's pockets they had learned his business association; by this time the reporters would be interviewing the members of the firm who would be sure to mention Billy's personal friends. Yes; for a while, until Hale could put his thoughts in shape, the west side parks would prove useful this morning.

In room number twelve at Jen Cordeen's, Marjorie sat on her bed with the newspaper before her; but she no longer read it. Sometimes she stared at the headlines and at Billy's name printed below — William Whittaker — followed by those words which said that he was dead; sometimes she stared at Clara, who was dressing now and saying nothing to her.

So she had killed Billy; she had killed Billy. It ran as a sort of dull, undownable refrain through her thoughts; she had killed Billy. Of course not meaning to, never dreaming that, as a result of anything she chose or did, Billy must die. But there he was out in the country somewhere in strangers' hands, dead by violence as a direct result of a course of conduct which she had chosen and which he had opposed from the first and with all his soul; and, if she had to account to no one else, she had to account to Billy for that. Mentally, she could believe that Billy was dead but she could not yet feel that fact; so here she was, considering his death while she still held the sensation that, for all she had done, she must yet complete a physical accounting with Billy and, to that accounting, was now added her responsibility in his own death.

For she was certain that he must be holding her re-

sponsible; undoubtedly, too, he must be accusing her father; but Marjorie dwelt upon her own guilt. "It is just what I always told you," she could imagine him saying, "you can't live with concealed sin." And she had said she could live with sin better than with scandal and so she had killed him.

And you could not cry over a result like that; to be able to cry, to convulse yourself in sobs and wet your face with tears, that would be a too easy, too merciful relief. No; here you were; before you, on the bed, was the record of what you had done; you had killed Billy. And, at how many turning points, when he had first ordered you and then pleaded with you and begged you to go one way, you had always gone the other leading to — "Lawyer Slain at Roadhouse" — Billy.

Here was the night you had come to Mrs. Russell's and your father's flat, and you had made Billy give you the name of the lawyer whom Gregg suggested, Rinderfeld. There, at the very first, Billy protested but you went ahead. You went, against Billy's pleading with you, to visit Rinderfeld, and you took Rinderfeld's advice against Billy. Then there was the afternoon on which Mr. Stanway called and you lied to him and, when Billy came, you told Billy of your lie and defended it, and he cried out that he could bear no longer your degrading yourself and he would tell the whole truth and have it out. You — you seized Billy's big, strong body and you shook him and told him he should not, he should not; and you used yourself up so that he got frightened about you and gave you your way again and let you go upon it, — on your way which led to this at the end — Billy Slain at Roadhouse.

"Better get dressed," Clara was saying to her; Clara, now dressed herself, had brought Marjorie's clothes,

clean underwear, and a plain black and white gingham which Marjorie had bought a few days before.

"Where're you going, Clara?"

"Out," said Clara, cutting the short word very short. "Unless I can do somethin' for you, kid."

"You can't," said Marjorie and Clara went, and Marjorie did not even wonder about Clara's errand. As she made definite moves in dressing, Marjorie discovered her own purpose was to go to Billy; that gave her something to do for him. Cragero's; she had never visited the place, though she had heard of it often; she picked up the paper to learn more exactly where it was.

The telephone bell, below, was ringing; and soon some one knocked at the door. Jen Cordeen, it was. "On the 'phone, for you," Jen announced; and Marjorie was sure that Clara, on her way out, had spoken to Jen; for Jen said not even good morning; that was Jen's way, — never to butt into others' affairs and, when something was the matter, to say even less than usual. "Mowbry, he gave his name."

It obliged Marjorie to reckon in Gregg on her accounting and, ever since she had heard, she had been keeping herself from that. But now, here he was in it; she couldn't escape thought of him, though it was thought of Gregg now forever without Billy; it was thought of Billy lost to Gregg, not in any metaphorical manner, but lost, dead and gone, with Gregg never to speak to Billy again or even to speak of Billy, except as dead.

She followed Jen downstairs to the office and she thought, Did Gregg *know?* Had that paper, which had reached her father at his club, reached also that top floor of the Ontario Street rooming house? For the

moment when she entered the office and Jen Cordeen stayed out and shut the door, Marjorie wanted to imagine Gregg yet as he had been, not knowing; and then she realized that, if he were so, she would have to tell him.

But he knew; his first tone, "Hello, Marjorie," made it as perfectly plain to her as hers, "Oh, Gregg, where are you?" made it plain to him that she knew.

"I'm with Bill, Marjorie," he told her then.

"Gregg, I want to come there."

"I'm coming back to town now; I want to come to you. No one can do any good here, Marjorie; the authorities — you understand they have to keep him where he is for a while. I've learned how it all happened; let me come there and tell you, Marjorie. I've got a car and I'll be right in; you'll wait there for me, won't you?"

"Oh, Gregg," she cried, "Gregg; Gregg." And she understood after a moment when his voice was gone that it was because he was coming; and she ran up to her room where she threw herself on her bed and received, at last, a merciful relief.

She was by her window when he arrived and she went down to the inner door as he entered; she seized his hands, cold and damp as her own were; his eyes came to hers. "He's not marked," Gregg told her first. "He lies — as if he were asleep."

"Yes," she said. "Yes; I wanted to know that."

Jen Cordeen had left the office open for them and empty; and the day bed, upon which she slept, had been made up as a couch. Marjorie and Gregg went in and closed the door.

He had on his blue suit and with it a black tie; he

had worn a little color always in his scarfs; so she realized and said, "You heard before you went out."

"Yes; they got our old address — my old address — from the telephone book and tried to call somebody there by 'phone last night. Early this morning they got about and finally knocked up Dora, who was with her mother on the floor below; she gave them my address. I heard about seven o'clock."

And, bit by bit, as she could best hear it, he continued telling her.

"I got that car from Jim Cuncliffe and went out. What do you know, Marjorie? Just what's in the paper?"

"Yes." And then she told him. "Father brought it to me. He thought I — I'd been at Cragero's with Mr. Rinderfeld! He thought that was why Billy was there; and that *was* why Billy was there, because I was with Mr. Rinderfeld last night."

"Not at Cragero's!" Gregg denied almost sharply.

"No; but in town; we had dinner together or at least we started dinner together. We were talking and he asked me to marry him; I mean he started — I all at once understood that all along he meant — he had the idea I might marry him. I got up from the table; we'd just got our order, and he was only telling me some things about himself but you see ——"

"I see," said Gregg. "You went home; and he didn't."

"It's perfectly clear to me what happened then, Gregg. He'd been telling me, admitting to me frankly that girls — women like Mrs. Russell — had formed his life; but he had stopped going with them after he got to know me. He was trying to make himself fit, he said, for me; and when I got up because I couldn't sit

there with him after I realized that he planned, he expected — I went home and he — he went back to the girls he'd given up; or to one of them." She stopped again.

"To one physically like you," Gregg continued, breathing very deep. "When the reporters described her, they gave me an awful minute, Marjorie; then they went on — and I knew she wasn't you. But of course, Bill didn't know that last night. He came into Cragero's sure you were there; it was just a frightful mistake all around. Rinderfeld — of course I had my time when I wanted to get him; but not a newspaper man blamed him. Not one; no, they were fair; they said nobody wanted to kill Bill or even hurt him." Gregg looked down, cleared his throat and looked at her again.

"People who were there — lots of them decent people — gave their names and agreed that nothing was going on that was wrong when Bill came in and tried to smash into a private dining room. Cragero tried to argue with him; then they tried to put him out; that was all; so he went for the bouncer and — it happened, Marjorie.

"I've just come from there, you know. That's the truth of the end of Bill. He died all at once, just as he was; and he knows now, Marjorie, if he knows anything, that you weren't there; that'd be the one thing he'd want to know. He's found it out; so he's happy and not — not bucking life, not just forever hopelessly fighting and trying to make over life, Marjorie. That's what he'd always have to do; that's what he always did; from the first day I met him at the U. of M., he was always wanting to make over — make over things and people, no matter how impossible it was. He

never wanted people — even you and me, whom he loved, Marjorie — he didn't want either of us as we have to be."

A few moments later he said, "So when you think about Bill out there at the road house, think of him not having to go on bucking life, fighting life with all his strength and will, and simply refusing to have life as — as it's got to be. You see, Marjorie, when you think it over that way, you see he had to come to something like that; nothing and no one could have stopped him. He was wrong, you see; he thought you were there and you weren't, and he wouldn't have it that you weren't there when he believed you were; so he fought them all and killed himself. And I guess, with him the way he was, there wasn't any other way out for Bill."

She said nothing to him; nor did she try to; for he had brought her comfort beyond any hope she could have held. And not once did he emptily reassure her by "it wasn't your fault"; or by "you've nothing to blame yourself for"; or by "you always acted for the best"; or by any of the other idle denials and protestations of such a time. He simply told her the truth as he felt it; and when again she cried, tears ran down his face, too. And thus, there together, he kissed her with a gentleness she had never known before, and she clung to him, for each needed the other so.

"He has to stay out there," Gregg told her then, "till this afternoon. There's an inquest, you see. I've wired his brother in Bay City who'll tell his parents; some one's sure to come down. They'll probably reply to Pearson Street; Dora'll get it. I'll have Bill brought there to-night."

She asked him about his own need of money for what

he must do; and he told her, "I got fifty dollars from Jim Cuncliffe when I got his car."

She ran up to her room and brought down twenty-four dollars she had there. "You must use this for expenses, Gregg." And he took it from her, without argument; but he said:

"I'll take you home now."

Home! "Home, for it's all over"; that was what his "home" said. And she knew he meant "home"; not to his own home in Muskegon, as Billy had meant to take her to his home in Bay City. Gregg meant to take her to her own home in Evanston, for it was over, her adventure here; it was over and she knew it. So she went out with him to Jim Cuncliffe's car and he took her home; then he left her to return, himself, to East Pearson Street.

CHAPTER XXVIII

HOME! What was this new difference in the big, quiet, clean, cool, perfectly kept halls and rooms? Not in the walls and furnishings, not in any single item of decoration or arrangement; everything was precisely as it always had been in summer; yet what a strange place, her home! How could one house become, in a few short months, so profoundly different from what it had been before that night of the Lovells' dance and then wholly alter again?

For it had been one place up to that morning which finally dawned with March sunshine on the snow and sparrows and pigeons hopping about as Marjorie looked out her window on the day after her visit to Mrs. Russell's flat on Clearedge Street; on that day and thereafter, as long as Marjorie remained at the house, life in her home had been wholly altered; and now here it was something strange again.

It had not swung back to what originally it had been; no, nothing like that; it seemed, instead, to have swung beyond the point to which it had dropped and reached another point of poise. Something like the pendulum in the big clock in the hall, which had two situations in which it halted and paused. Now up here to the left it swung to its highest point, stopped and stood; that was life in her home as it first had been. Now it dropped to the bottom but no stop there; just a swing through. That was the second situation in her home; that was the March morning; now the swing up

to the next point of pause. Here we were now; here her life was, for the time standing still. You could not see the pendulum actually stand; yet you knew it must; it was obliged to be for some instant at rest. So now must come to the Hales a moment of rest.

Marjorie was in her own room, which was clean and fresh as always it had been kept for her. She had spoken to Sarah and Martin, both of whom knew about Billy; and Sarah had followed her to her room with offers to "help"; but Marjorie only thanked her and sent her away.

No change in Marjorie Hale's bright, pleasant room; nothing different; no surprise until, opening a drawer in her desk, she came upon a pile of unopened letters to her from her mother. Some one, her father probably, had arranged them in order by postmarks and one had arrived for each week her mother had been away. Marjorie noticed the postmarks: London, Winchester, Bath, and the other English towns and cities visited exactly on the schedule which her mother had made long before. Beyond doubt her mother had received, on schedule, the letters which Marjorie had written weekly in care of the Pall Mall office of the Guaranty Trust, which was always her mother's forwarding agent; and Marjorie was sure that, unless some extraordinary upset had occurred, there was nothing in all this pile of letters which would have required from her more concrete reply than she had made in her letters written without seeing these. She looked through them and found that her presumption had proved correct.

These were thoughtful, excellently expressed letters which her mother wrote, appreciative of the beauties, the serenities, the dignities of the sea, of the shore, of moor and downs, of Parliament buildings with the moon

above them, of St. Paul's, Westminster, the Roman remains at Bath. What a world removed her mother lived in, how far from Mrs. Russell's flat on Clearedge Street and from Cragero's; and yet, how closely were those worlds connected to-day, opposite though they were, when for her father to resort to one was an outcome of her mother inhabiting the other.

Church bells were ringing — so many bells in Evanston — and booming with no wondering appeal; for people were going to church and as they passed, suddenly it was not Marjorie Hale but Marjorie Conway, roommate of Clara Seeley, who watched them from the window. There they passed, men and women, young and older; and just now Marjorie was thinking particularly of certain of the women, good and respectable by any ordinary reckoning. That was, they maintained honesty, verbal and financial integrity, agreeable manners, and professed faith, hope and charity, and practiced giving to the poor. But what gave they for what they gave away? What gave they for the far greater sums they lavished directly, or indirectly, upon themselves?

They had given, or they meant to give sometime, under conditions which would cost them as little as possible, the pain and inconvenience of motherhood; some of them once and that once for all; some of them twice. Then afterwards these had lived, or they meant to live, by what?

Marjorie imagined Clara Seeley beside her and knowing what she did about some of these people; and she seemed to hear Clara say: "Kept wives!"

And to possess a mansion, to build for yourself the housing for a family with many rooms and with wide lawn and to fill it with servants enough to minister to many, to buy with your husband's money the display

of appurtenances of a home for many children and for the woman to bear a single child for her justification for ease all her life; that became to Marjorie base and despicable.

Still the church bells, booming.

A car turned in at the house and Marjorie saw her father on the rear seat; in the silence she heard his voice speaking to Martin; now he was on the stairs. She arose and went to the middle of her room when he rapped and called to her in a low tone.

She said, "Please come in, father."

"So you're still here; Martin telephoned forty minutes ago that you had come home. He reached me at the club."

"Yes," she said. "I've been reading mother's letters." Then, "We all had our part in killing Billy, didn't we, father? And of course he had his part in killing himself; and nobody meant to. That's what Gregg said even about them out there, at Cragero's; nobody meant to."

He gazed at her straight without speaking until, after a few moments, he asked, "You've come home to stay, Margy?"

"Have you, father?"

His eyes remained on hers, straight; they gained distance, gazing through her, and lost the distance again. He did not speak.

"That's not fair; I know it now, father," she said, catching breath quickly. "I haven't asked mother to come home. I'll stay here now; of course, I'll stay near you, if you want me to. But about coming home — me; of course I've not done that."

Yet he waited.

"Home, father; home's a sort of fairy place, isn't

it? It's not like any other house in the world when it's home; your father's not like any other man; nor your mother like any other woman. When they are, it's gone like that, home; and you can't come back to it just by opening a door of a house and stepping in, can you?"

He cleared his throat and after a moment said: "No. This isn't — home, Marjorie; of course I know I can never make a house home for you again."

It caught her up with eyes suddenly filled and she seized his hands. "Father, oh father! I'd like to have it back! I'd come back home if I could!"

"I know, Margy," he said, "I know; but we can't have — home." After a minute he told her. "I am going to arrange, in regard to your mother, for a decent and recognized separation. Whatever I personally do in the future — I don't know yet what that will be — at least will be openly done. You want to know that; I want you to."

"Yes," she said. "That's just what I wanted to know." And she kissed him, and he went out.

He entered his room where was that chair of his — "father's chair" — which belonged to the days when Marjorie was born; and he felt that he would give anything to begin back there again when he first sat in that chair holding her. Then he felt he would give as much to be back where he was on that March night when she last put her arms about his neck and believed him not like any other man in the world, though he was going then to Sybil Russell.

In the afternoon Gregg telephoned that the county authorities had completed their inquiries and had found no basis for criminal proceedings in connection with Billy's death. Also Mr. Kemphill himself, of Billy's firm, had conferred with the State's attorney and was

satisfied that no crime had been committed; and Gregg added that Clara Seeley had appeared at Cragero's.

"She went to find Rinderfeld first, I think," Gregg stated. "But he's under cover somewhere, keeping watch but not showing himself." And Gregg told that he had explained to Clara that he had taken Marjorie home; and as Clara wanted to do something, he asked her to get together Marjorie's things so he could send for them. And Marjorie telephoned and talked to Clara at Cordeen's.

The Monday morning papers, cooled of their sensation by the failure of the State to find evidence of a crime, published little more than on the day before. They said: "Whittaker mistakenly had believed that Marjorie Hale, daughter of the president of Tri-Lake Products and Material Corporation, was in danger at Cragero's. It appears that Miss Hale did not accompany her mother to England as had been announced, but had remained in Chicago, making sociological investigations as a working girl." The papers explained that Whittaker had been engaged to Miss Hale and had never been in sympathy with her investigations, but the newspapers were all silent as to any circumstances which might have led Miss Hale to go to work. They added merely that Miss Hale was now at home again with her father; and they told of the coming of Whittaker's two brothers from Bay City.

And so, late upon the afternoon of that day, a service was read in the apartment on East Pearson Street and, immediately afterward, Gregg left with Billy's brothers on the journey with Billy to Bay City.

Marjorie, who had Clara beside her, delayed in the apartment until all the men were gone except her father; she was experiencing that lost sensation which

follows the full realization that one who has been a companion will never be seen again; and Marjorie was feeling particularly lost, because now she was aware that she had not planned beyond this service.

"I can't want to go back to Clearedge Street, Clara," she said. "I want to go home but not talk to people there. I want you to go home with me."

"Your father don't," Clara observed frankly.

"He's going to his office," Marjorie reported; and she went with Clara down to the car which he had left for her. Leonard was driving and, as it was the open car, Marjorie attempted little discussion with Clara on the way to Evanston; besides, she wished Clara to see her home before she talked. And Clara saw it much as it usually was, arriving in the car with Leonard out of his seat and opening the door for Marjorie and her guest to alight; with Leonard touching his cap and asking, "Anything to-night, Miss Hale?" Then Martin opened the screen door of the house; Sarah was waiting in the lower hall and another maid in the room upstairs.

"Gawd!" exclaimed Clara to Marjorie, in the first minute after she had escaped from their ministrations and the two of them were alone in Marjorie's room with the door shut. "Gawd, you gave up a lot. Why, if I had two men Miss Seeleying me like that pair of yours and another pair of females worryin' about nothing so much as maybe I'd forget myself and lift a finger, and also, it's perfectly plain, somebody else cookin' in the kitchen, I don't think it'd be long before I'd be pretty sure I was doin' enough for the world just by livin'."

"I guess," said Marjorie, pleased by the quickness with which Clara's incisive mind went under the surface of this strange life, "that's how people who live this

way get to feel." And a little later, after they had gone about the house, in response to Clara's request, Marjorie asked, "Well, what are you thinking now?"

"How puzzling it must be," Clara replied promptly but with deliberation, speaking her gs, as she did when she thought about them and enunciated carefully.

"To whom?"

"Well," said Clara, "to the man, especially; when he's handing out all this, I don't see how your father'd ever know where he was."

"Oh," Marjorie comprehended, "you mean where he was with my mother."

"I mean any man who hands his wife a layout like this," Clara generalized, refusing the too personal. "I don't see how he'd ever know whether she was sticking to him for himself or for this. And it wouldn't make it any too simple for her to know herself. Well, what are we here for, Marjorie? You ain't one to ask me up to show off, though I do appreciate a touch of high life. What's on your chest?"

Marjorie took Clara again to her own room. "You know so many pieces of what's happened to the Hales, I want to tell you the whole thing; and after coming back here myself from Clearedge Street, it didn't seem to me fair to try to tell you without bringing you here first."

"Not fair to me?" asked Clara.

"No; not fair to mother and father." And there, in Marjorie's room, much as they talked together at Jen Cordeen's, Marjorie related all to Clara.

At the end, Clara pronounced no judgment; indeed, she offered no comment at all; she merely asked, "Well, now what are you goin' to do, kid?"

It was spontaneous, utterly unconscious and wholly

fond and loving, that "kid"; and exactly what Marjorie wanted at that instant; for she wanted Clara to tell her truths and talk to her again as she had that first night they roomed together after the return from Sennens'.

"What should I do, Clara?"

"Marry," answered Clara abruptly. "That's what you been brought up to do. Marry him quick, right away, before you have a chance to forget feelin' like you do now."

"Marry him?" repeated Marjorie. "Who?"

"Gawd," Clara rebuked with disgust. "You know who; and I know who was the answer that the big boy never really got you. He's not like him; he don't hit me at all like that big boy did. I just wanted ——" Clara's eyes filled and her lips quivered so that she waited an instant before she repeated — "I just wanted to put my arms around and just take care of that big boy and keep him like he was. He wanted to do that to you. But you're not one to want to keep or be kept; you have to play the game, give and take. That's your Gregg Mowbry; he's out of a job and busted, I understand. Kid, if all this actually has come to mean nothing in your life now," Clara motioned generally around the room, "could you beat this time for going to your man?"

CHAPTER XXIX

HALE, telephoning, learned from Martin that Miss Hale was having her guest for dinner; consequently, he dined at his club and returned home about nine o'clock and went almost immediately to his room. Marjorie kept Clara for the night and together they arose early in the morning, breakfasted while Hale was still in his room, and then set out for the city by the elevated train about the time that he was sitting down at the table.

Clara went on to the south side where she was demonstrating in a beauty parlor that week, and Marjorie, as Miss Conway for the last time, called at the dingy, Wells Street office of Herman Bostrock, where she turned in her celluloid elephants and other samples and thanked Mr. Bostrock for the opportunity he had given her; she resigned her territory and drew her last commissions. On Dearborn Street, fifteen minutes later, Marjorie Hale made her first business call and obtained another position, starting at once on work which kept her in town until five o'clock.

When, in the next morning, Gregg telephoned to Evanston, Martin said that Miss Hale had left word for Mr. Mowbry that she would be home about six o'clock; and Marjorie, calling up Martin at noon, learned that Mr. Mowbry had 'phoned, had asked where he could find her and, after being told that Martin did not know, Mr. Mowbry had said he would be out about eight o'clock.

Marjorie was home at six and her father arrived a few minutes later; she bathed, rested, dressed in white, and went downstairs to find that her father also had changed from his business attire and was in white flannels, for it was warm this evening. The summer hum and drone of insects marked the heat, and the sunset rays lay yellow across the white walks and cast sharp, clear shadows of the motionless boughs on the lawn where the sprinklers were spinning gleaming drops of water over the gardens and grass.

It was a week when Canterbury bells were in their blue and white blooms, when hollyhocks were spreading their red and yellow clusters up the tall, straight, pale green stems, and larkspur stood, deep blue and stiff-looking, against the white garage fence.

Midsummer was a beautiful but, to Marjorie Hale, almost a strange season in Evanston; for the women and children of fashionable Evanston long ago have affected the summer hegira to other, and not always cooler places. They merely "shut" their homes, if they can afford it, leaving a servant or two to keep up the house and lawn; or they rent their abodes, furnished, to women and children from other cities who look upon the comfortable, modern little city on the shore of the great lake as a most desirable summer resort.

So most of the Hales' neighbors were away; the Chadens, or at least Mrs. Chaden and Ethel, were at Mackinac; Mrs. Sedgwick and Clara and Elsie were in Colorado; the Cleves at Harbour Point, at the northern end of the lake; Mrs. Vane was traveling in Norway.

Marjorie dropped into a chair in the drawing-room, where an electric fan was maintaining a current of cool air, and picked up the *Evanston News-Index* for the day's record of departures and the doings of Evans-

tonians abroad. Her mother's name was not in to-night; but Marjorie knew that often it was and her own had been with it; and, glancing across the room to her father, she imagined him here alone, on some previous hot, quiet evening like this, reading, "Mrs. Charles Hale and her daughter are now in London, stopping at Claridge's where they entertained ——"

He was seated in range of the fan, smoking a cigarette and reading; or at least holding a newspaper before him.

"Gregg's coming up to-night, father," she said.

"Hmhm; all right," he looked around the paper at her. "That's good, if you want to see him."

"I do," she replied, and returned to the *Index* while he watched her.

Martin announced dinner and her father formally stood back for her to precede him into the dining room.

No more than three usually made the family table here in this large, quiet room, yet two seemed extraordinarily lonely at the table this evening. It was supper, really, not dinner; mostly cold things and iced coffee in tall, tinkling glasses. Marjorie drank her coffee but cared little about eating; she was restless, sitting there across the table from her father, but she particularly tried to control herself; for what kept her on edge was expectancy and impatience for an hour to come; for eight o'clock; and there was a dullness about her father to-night which was a denial of, almost the antithesis of, her own feeling.

She thought at first, "It's because I feel this way so much that he seems different." Then she knew that the change in him was not wholly, or even mostly, in her feeling. Always, even when he was weak following his wound from Russell's bullet, he had kept himself "on

edge"; you felt him always possessed of a certain impatience or of an expectancy for something ahead, of an hour to come. That was gone from him now; here he was at the table with her; and she thought, "He's taking things as they happen." And she did not like something about this; it was not *him*. She thought, "He's been hit awfully hard by Billy's death and by his fright about me."

But this did not satisfactorily explain her feeling of the absence of an attitude which previously had characterized him. She thought, "It's because he has given up something." When she set herself to selecting what that was, she could come upon but one adequate answer; it was because he had given up Mrs. Russell. And when Marjorie thought this, there ought to have been more gratification in it for her than there was.

Only now — and only with slowness, now that it was established and she could observe it — did she discern that what she had brought about by all she had done, and what had been brought about by Billy's death, was a negation for her father; they had imposed simply a *shalt not* when, for the companionship forbidden, he could turn to — what?

CHAPTER XXX

GREGG was coming to Evanston by the elevated railroad; for of course he had returned Jim Cuncliffe's roadster a couple of days before. He had not returned to Jim the fifty dollars he had borrowed because he was not able to; but he did have it noted, along with an exactly itemized and totalled reckoning of his other debts, in a memorandum book which Bill once had given him and which he had never used.

As the electric train sped by Fullerton, crossed Sheridan Road and now as it passed Wilson Avenue, Gregg wanted to keep his thoughts and his feelings wholly on Marjorie; but unbidden flashes of recollection kept bringing in Bill.

"It's his own life." That was what he, Gregg, had said to Jim Cuncliffe when back there in March — how long ago and yet only in March — Jim had told him that Russell meant to get Charles Hale and that Gregg must interfere. "It's his own life." He had meant by that Mr. Hale's life was his own, individual affair. But it had proved to be Bill's life which had been at stake; yes, and Gregg's own life, too; for he could remind himself that Russell had almost succeeded in killing him.

And he thought of his ride to Evanston with Bill along a snowy road — along Sheridan Road, over there where the cars in midsummer number now were streaming; he thought how he had gone sick at the moment when he imagined what might happen if Marjorie

learned what he knew that night. Well, she had learned that and much more; and all that he had imagined happening to her had come — and more. For he never had fancied such a result as that Bill, who had sat so big and strong and upright beside him, would prove to be the one not to come through the trouble.

Gregg was not deluding himself that it was over, because Bill was dead and Marjorie was home again with her father; of course it was not over, he was realizing; nothing can ever be "over" in the sense that its consequences become complete. But they can reach periods of intermission, those consequences, when they give you breath and rest, and a chance to get hold of yourself before once more they hurry you on. And so to-night Gregg, like Marjorie since he had taken her home, grasped at this sensation of pause.

But he did not know that this had come also to her; as he approached her, he tormented himself with his image of her as she struggled with him at the telephone booth of the club when the fear first struck at her; of how he saw her in the vestibule at Number 4689 Clearedge Street, when he had to come down from Mrs. Russell's flat and let Marjorie in and he lied to her; of how she picked up her father's photograph from Mrs. Russell's desk and — knew; of how he saw her come out of her home to speak to Rinderfeld that night he and she walked together by the lake; of how she reëntered her home, in fright; of how he had found her in the office at Cordeen's when he came to tell her how Billy had died.

Quiet was Evanston this evening, and particularly still was that neighborhood of the Hales'; here at last was the big, wide-verandahed home, gray in the dusk and half hidden behind its trees, through which shone

the glow of shaded, yellow lights within the house. When Gregg turned into the walk, he saw a white figure on one of the seats on the lawn; Marjorie called to him in a low, steady stone, "Here I am," and she arose and they came to each other.

She gave him her hands. "Here we are," she said and her palms pressed on his; and he hardly could see her. They went to the bench, but there was no more light.

He wanted her in his arms; he wanted his lips hot on hers. What held him? Not the poorness of his pockets; not that total of debt in Bill's memorandum book. Gregg Mowbry's pockets were used to borrowed money; he was young and he again could be sure of himself. What held him?

"Here we are." He had never heard just that from a girl before; but he knew what it meant, for it spoke what filled him. "Here we are, you and I; and I've become yours and you've become mine. Here we are!"

What held him?

Not Bill, for Bill was gone forever; and this girl never actually had been Bill's, and for long before Bill went she had known it.

Gregg Mowbry who had driven beside Bill on that snowy March night to this house and to Marjorie Hale, that Gregg Mowbry might have seized this girl tight in his arms, kissing her, lifting her, drawing her closer to him, — if he might have imagined her not Bill's but his. He would have said, "We're going to get married, you and I. I'll have another good job soon from somebody." And they might have laughed together.

"Hurry, go get it," she might have said. To be married would have meant to them only to go on together having a light-hearted, irresponsible, "good" time

with the new thrills and joys of complete possession of each other's bodies.

But Gregg Mowbry since then had sat alone with Sybil Russell in that flat on Clearedge Street, while Charles Hale, unconscious, was carried to Fursten's; at Kilkerry's he awaited Russell's return; he had lost his job and left Billy; and gone to Cragero's for Bill; had taken Bill, just now, home; and he, Gregg Mowbry, had come back from Bay City alone. So he held Marjorie Hale by her hands, his palms on hers and he said:

"I got a real job to-day, Marjorie. Not much real money."

"I know the kind of job you got, Gregg," she said.

"The first work job I ever took on. Twenty-four a week to start with; four dollars a day, I mean. With Chicago Hydraulics; I'll be started down the canal on water power. That sort of thing got me once, when I was a kid; I took my course in Michigan at engineering — hydraulics. But I seemed to be a salesman when I got out; I mean somebody offered me a drawing account of forty dollars a week selling gasoline pumps. Twenty was the limit for me as a hydraulic expert. So I put off starting at the bottom until to-day. In a couple of years, Marjorie, I ought to have a fair position and something ahead. I'm trying real work on account of myself and partly, of course, because of Bill; but I'd like to work for you and me, Marjorie. Will you wait a while to give me a chance to make good for you?"

"No," she said. "I'll not wait, Gregg." Then she told him, "Because we needn't; we mustn't. If we waited for you to do it all, we'd never get right with each other; for we'd start wrong."

"Not wait to be married?" asked Gregg.

"I've a real job too, now. I resigned at Bostrock's to-day and began with Leffrick, selling accounting systems for small stores, Gregg. I've known some of Leffrick's city salespeople — women — for quite a while. They work full time or part time, if they've families; he arranges territories for them, according to the time they can put in. I'm starting a full timer with a drawing account based on my last month with Bostrock, twenty a week. I can change to part time whenever I ask to, so when I'm married ——" she caught her breath and said, "when we're married ——"

"We married!" Gregg whispered and had to gasp for breath, too.

"We can start on forty-four dollars a week, as long as we're both earning. We can live on that and we're going to, and also we'll put by so that when our babies come, we'll have a little saved."

He gathered her in his arms and held her to him.

"Marjorie!" he whispered; and he spoke only her name again and again. "Marjorie; Marjorie ——" and he thought only, "I have her," and he felt her against him and in his arms. Then he felt himself in her arms; she was clasping him; and so they kissed and drew back the barest trifle and held their lips on each other's again. Then that which had been restraining them both — until in this physical yielding they put it away and denied it — that touched them again and relaxed their arms and separated their lips. It was contact with that which physical yielding had led to, — memory of her father shot in the flat on Clearedge Street, of her lie to Stanway, of Billy quiet and so white. She had to banish all this again; and not even Gregg's arms or hers about him could do it. The only

way was to pledge to themselves and plan a life which could not lead to such visions; and so there in the garden, but soon holding close once more and between kisses and embraces, they planned.

Quixotically in part, perhaps; but also in part practically. For she needed him now; it was impossible for her to long continue alone with her father in a situation too strained for both of them. If Gregg did not marry her, she would work and live alone; and he would work and live alone; so why not both work, married? They realized that they could not start out in Evanston, at least not in "their" part of Evanston or in a similar part of Chicago or of Winnetka. They would live as forty-dollar-a-week people lived and not put a move into a better flat or put the buying of a car before the coming of children.

In his room, and in his chair which Marjorie always had called "father's chair," Charles Hale was seated beside a shaded lamp with a book in his hand; but he consumed little time at reading.

He had to think a good deal about himself and Sybil Russell with whom, that day, he had broken; or rather, she had realized on this day that he meant to break with her; and they had come to an end. At least, they called it an end; but such an end settled little for him. He would not see Sybil in the old way, that was all. Some day there must be for him another woman; and she would be to him another Sybil or she might be something else, according to what action he now took in his personal affairs.

This meant what course he followed in regard to his wife and daughter; and the one sensible course with his wife was to arrange with her for a formal separation.

There were several courses he might take with Marjorie, each one of which offered difficulties; for he never imagined that Marjorie meant soon to marry Gregg. But, about ten o'clock, they came together to his door, Gregg rapped and he let them in, and they told him.

When they were gone, he walked about his room, staring before him at the floor and with his chest constrained with a queer, drawn tightness. His baby was going to be married; she wanted him to stand with her when the man who would become her husband stood on the other side of her before the minister; but except for that, she asked nothing, and it was evident to him that she would accept little more from him. Well, that was something; they might have gone away and been married all by themselves.

Also, though they meant to strike out by themselves, he would be always near to help in sickness or disaster; they could not deny him that; and that was something.

Forty-four dollars a week, twenty of which his daughter would earn! Hmhm! He did not like it; but suppose his wife had ever loved him like that! Suppose they had started, Corinna and he, on the basis of how much each could give to the other. Oh, Corinna for a while had put up with little from him, but because of her certainty that soon he would earn her much. Hmhm.

But why did he have this big house and his big income now? For alimony to his wife; for next to nothing, so far as his daughter was concerned. It was for himself, then, and the woman who next would be his. Not this house; no, hardly. Hmhm. Perhaps his wife wanted it; he must think of that. He would do

generously by her in the settlement; that would be altogether more pleasant to him.

But Marjorie; she was shut off from her mother almost as much as from him. He gathered that from what Marjorie planned and assumed for the future rather than from anything Marjorie had said. And of course the girl would be shut off, living where Mowbry and she intended, and in the manner forty-four dollars a week necessitated. What an upturn for his girl! Yet she would be safe enough, safe in a physical and moral sense. Safe, she had come through her experience away from home by herself; she had not been that girl at Cragero's. When he thought of it, the shock of his fear for her seized him for a few seconds; but she had come through safe.

And now she would become what? A wife, a mate for a man, working beside him; and she would become a mother. His little girl, his baby. His eyes were wet as he thought on; he knew a bit of what she was in for; she only guessed; but he could not imagine her quitting. No; that wouldn't be Margy. And he thought, "It worked out something better for her." Something far harder, of course; something far more arduous and trying than he ever had expected his daughter to undergo; but better. Yes, better for her.

More than ever before Charles Hale required himself to find compensation in what he had done; and here he had something of compensation. Not nearly enough for all those consequences which now included Billy's death; yet here was something, — a definite, observable something.

He wanted to see his daughter again; but she and Gregg had returned to the garden around the corner of the house and he would not go down there to intrude

upon them. He remained in his room; and at last, after midnight, he knew that Gregg had gone, for Marjorie came upstairs; and at the top, she hesitated — he thought — whether to come again to his room; so he opened his door to show that he was still up. But she went on to her own room and closed the door.

For Marjorie wanted to be alone with her new wonder which was nothing more nor less than the amazement of woman renewing the world by love of man and through her body.

Her body! What had it been for her before? It had been before — and by "before" always she meant before that night of the Lovells' dance, after which everything became different — her possession for barter for her livelihood. It was a strong, healthy, well-formed body and inhabited by brain enough so that she was in small danger of bartering it for the pitiful pottage of the girl who becomes wanton. No; Marjorie never even imagined herself as having been in danger of that. Her barter was to have been in the marriage market, trading according to the custom of the day. For me, what have you? Ease? Entertainment and enjoyment? Position and privileges? Travel and luxury abroad or at home? I have for you — my body; no other duty or obligation except perhaps one child from it, or, if it threatens to deprive me of nothing, maybe two.

This — Marjorie thought — was what she had been and she would have never bothered about it. No wonder Felix Rinderfeld could discern that what had been knocked from under her that night was not merely an illusion concerning her father but a fallacy regarding her whole situation, for she had imagined herself normal enough and right enough. No wonder that her

stock in America seemed almost "through" when it lived and thought like that; no wonder that pressing, pressing in from all about and filtering through appeared the displacers of the Sedgwicks, Chadens, Vanes and Cleves, the Lovells and the Hales.

"But the Mowbrys won't go down," Marjorie Hale, soon to be Mowbry, murmured her defiance to the Nordquists, Linduskas, Kostics, and Rinderfelds. "They'll rise and they won't diminish."

And there came to Marjorie, alone in her room, the sense of herself a molder and a bearer of the future.

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